

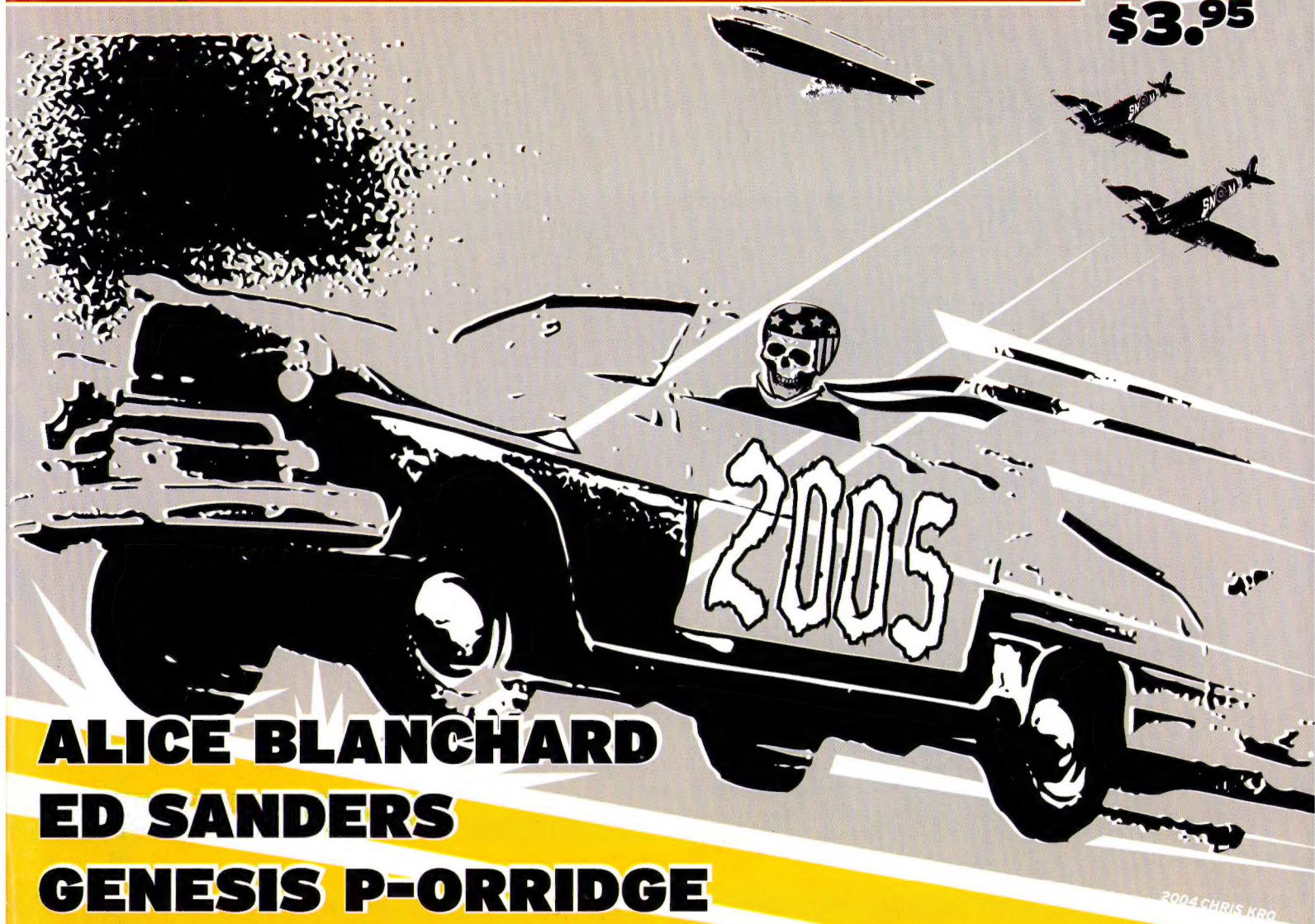
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What Becomes A Legend Most **THE TEXAS TERRI INTERVIEW**

BY DOM SALEMI

Often referred to as the distaff Iggy Pop, LA-by-way-of-Austin Terri Laird has apparently disingenuously constructed a legendary reputation in the rock underground primarily on the basis of her provocative and electrifying stage performances. Reports surfacing during the last three years, both from overseas and the smaller burbs of these United States, hint at dirty deeds done dirt cheap, inflammatory audience baiting and increasingly outrageous antics, so outrageous in fact, that propriety forbids us from mentioning them here. Whether or not any of these stories are apocryphal is beside the point. It's an axiom in the journalistic field that when a reporter is confronted with both

the fact and the legend, he or she is to print the legend. It makes for better copy and helps sales. The fact appears to be, however, that Texas Terri, despite releasing only two cds and a handful of singles in her short thirty-two year life, has amassed a sizeable following and this largely by word of mouth. Her fans may not be legion but they are dazed and confused by what they call TT's astounding raw power. Yeah, there is that Iggy thing again, and, as the Ig is our idol, and our ideal, we decided to put our tv eyes on Texas Terri and ask her for a little danger when we heard she was coming to Baltimore. Yeah, baby, search and destroy and go out with the question:

Brutarian: *What becomes a legend most? Surely, a slot on Lil Steven's Underground Garage Rock Festival? Why weren't you invited? You're more authentic in terms of garage and punk and just hard rock and he's got every band in creation up there, including The Creation, come to think of it.*

TT: Well, thank you for saying that. But we owe our failure to receive an invitation to BAD MANAGEMENT! Because I have a terrible booker and I manage my own band and I can't keep up with everything. Because I e-mailed about a million cool contacts and was

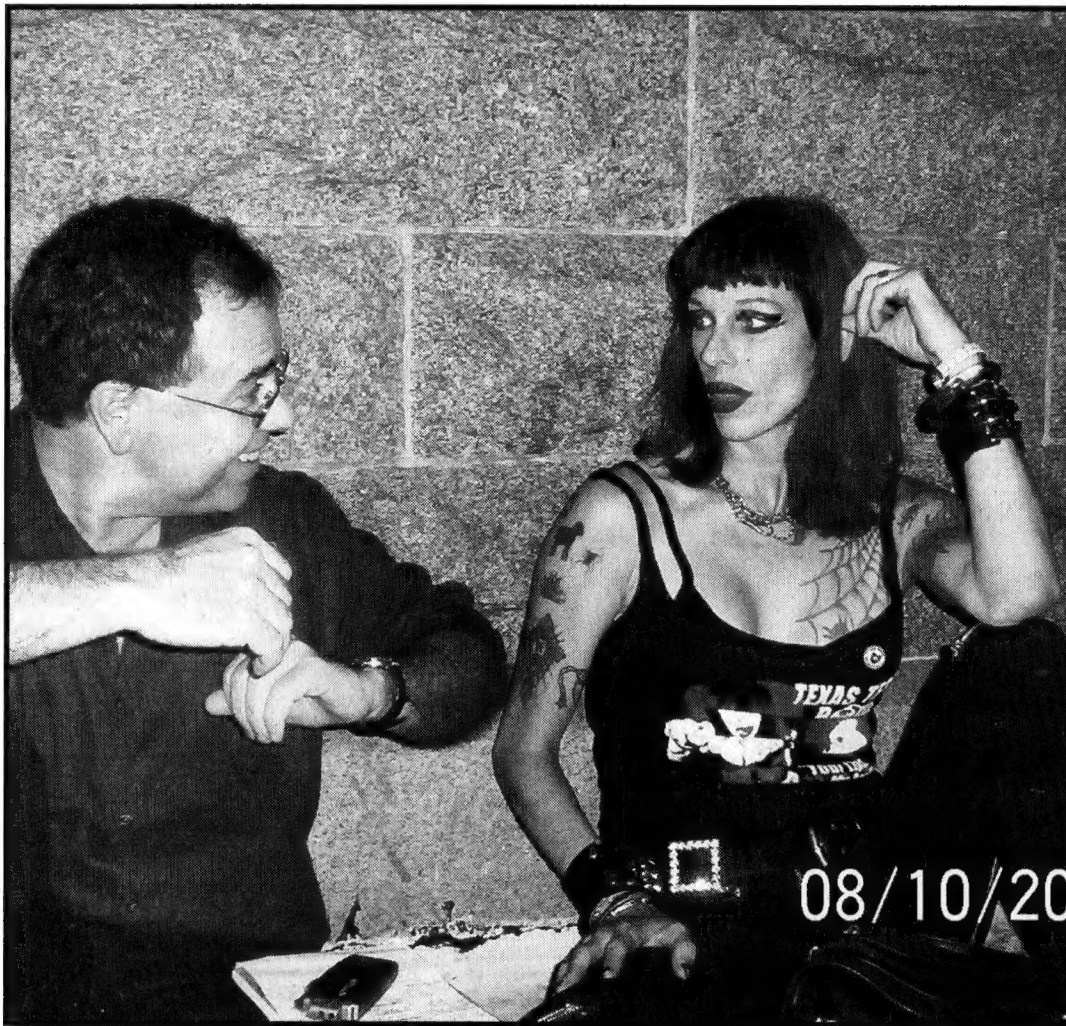
told that all the bands playing at the Festival have fifteen minute slots except for The Stooges and The Dolls who are headliners and because we found out about it late we just couldn't even get our fifteen minutes. And hell we're playing with Cheetah Chrome right now so it would have been perfect as he was with the Dead Boys and they were playing at the time Ig was, so our being there would have been perfect. I just don't know what our booker was thinking.

Brutarian: *Well, we listen to Lil Steven's*

show pretty faithfully but haven't heard anything of yours played.

TT: Well, when you have to run everything yourself, you don't always have the time to find the right person who knows this someone and who, in turn, can forward it to, in this case, Lil Steven. That's what a manager is for. SO I'M LOOKING FOR A MANAGER EVERYBODY! SOMEONE WHO CAN TAKE CARE OF ALL THIS SHIT!

Brutarian: *So what becomes a legend*



either love me or hate me because I was so much like him. And I thought, "Well that doesn't sound so cool," but I was shooting drugs at the time and I just never showed, and when my friends asked me what the hell happened, I told them and they said: "That is so Iggy!" And I wasn't even in a band at the time. So it just seems that there was something about me . . . Of course I knew about his music but I'd just never seen him. Then when I got a band, people starting again with the comparisons so I finally decided I had to see Iggy. Which I did but, although amazed, I didn't really see it. Then sometime later, I'm playing at the Continental in New York and a friend of Iggy's, who now is also a friend of mine, was watching me very very intently. A little unnerving. So when I finish, I go up to him and said, "What the hell is your problem?" And he

most? Is an outrageous stage act necessary? Are all the stories true? We've been reading that taking off your shirt, your clothes, was not really meant to be provocative or sexually stimulating? C'mon, you are pretty attractive, you aren't going to deny that you meant to get the guys and lesbians in the audience stimulated?

TT: The "stage act" is mostly me taking off my shirt because I'm hot. I end up topless but with duct tape across my chest. I mean, listen, every guy in rock and roll takes his shirt off, why can't I? That just shows the inherent prejudice in the guy-girl dynamic in rock. A guy takes his shirt off? No big deal. I do it and I'm putting on an outrageous stage show. That's the reason, too, I've stopped doing it. In the early days, it was amusing to see how people reacted but then, well, guys were expecting it and it was not meant to be a come on. It just felt rock and roll. I didn't intend for it

to be sexual. So now I just strip down to my bra and all this talk about the "stage show" has stopped. And because I have the music to back up what I do, people are listening instead of just looking. No more being booked with crappy novelty acts . . .

Brutarian: Well, speaking of another guy who likes to take his shirt off and sometimes his pants, Iggy, how do you deal with what seems like the constant comparisons to him?

TT: I find these comparisons amusing because I was acting the way I do now and had not even ever seen Iggy. And then some friends of mine had tickets and back stage passes and told me to come with them because he would

says, "It's really really strange but offstage you don't look like him at all. But when you're onstage, wow, you could be Iggy's sister." So I thought, "Well, coming from a guy like him, there must be something to all of this." Still, I've never tried to be like Iggy. Whatever comes out, comes out.

Brutarian: Well, The Stooges developed a cult following with only two lps and you have only two cds out . . .

The "stage act" is mostly me taking off my shirt because I'm hot.

TT: Those records had a, hmmm, notorious reputation and I'm hoping that

something like that will be generated with my work. Although they weren't commercially successful.

Brutarian: *When we spoke with Mr. Pop he told us that bands and performers, especially those operating on the margins, had to be prepared to starve and to go through that visionary-unrecognized-in-their-own-land thing. In other words, hang in there!*

TT: Well, again thank you very much but it's still hard to see the light at the end of . . .

Brutarian: *Things must be looking up: Jack Douglas produced your new disc. God, he's worked with Patti Smith and Aerosmith . . .*

TT: . . . and John Lennon, I know but it hasn't really done anything. And it sounds really good, so thank you Jack. The record company didn't give a rat's ass, so it hasn't been really pushed, despite having Wayne Kramer and Cherie Curie and other big names on it. I don't know, it's a really weird time right now in rock . . .

Brutarian: *So why not get a manager to help push things. You can't find someone in LA? A legendary type like yourself.*

TT: It's this simple: I've been there too long. And having been there for so long and not making money, no one wants to take me on. It doesn't matter that I'm drug and alcohol free, and that I'm responsible and running my whole show myself. It's about money and being someone's meal ticket, and I haven't proven that I can be that.

Brutarian: *But isn't that the responsibility*

of the manager? To make someone rich and famous and successful? You're already famous, at least in LA.

TT: No, that's old school. Now you have to be making money before a manager wants to sign on. And I know this is sounding like a very negative Q&A and I know a lot of bands would love to be in my shoes – love to be able to travel overseas and to have followings in major cities. But after all this time and effort, what do I have to look

let me ask you, why do you think I'm a black sheep?

Brutarian: *We have no idea as you are certainly quite gracious and very approachable. In any case, kiddo, we're here to ask the questions . . .*

TT: [Laughing] I use the term "black sheep" as indicating that I'm uncompromising and real and don't pull any punches. That makes me somewhat . . . ummm . . . unmanageable, not given to easily being formatted and shaped . . .

Brutarian: *And that's a problem?*

TT: One wouldn't think so, especially when you start to work with me and realize that all I think about is being successful. All I think about is putting on a good show. All I think about is my audience and their needs . . . That may not be moldable but it's certainly workable. But maybe that's where this "black



forward to when I go home? Cleaning up the fucking mess, trying to gather up all the press and videos and pictures that were shot on this US tour while trying to examine the logistics of a European tour. We want to make sure we get over there at the right time. We don't want to wind up in northern Europe in the winter freezing our asses off. Hell, that's why I'm in LA; I love the weather.

Brutarian: *You've often referred to yourself as the "black sheep" of the rock and roll world. Do you think this has something to do with your lack of financial success?*

TT: It's a curious paradox, but first

sheep" image pops up. In someone's mind. I work hard and expect the record company to work just as hard to hold up their end. They don't seem to realize that this is not a lark; I mean business. Most bands are happy to have their records in the stores. Well, check that; I would be too. I can't tell you how many stores I check out and find that my record isn't in there. Or how many fans come up to me and ask where they can get the new record.

Again, this is coming out so negative, but it's only because I know that if people would just get the chance to hear and see me, they would be enthused.

Especially now that I have this fabulous band behind me. And with Cheetah Chrome. My God, wouldn't people be turning out in droves if they knew? They should know.

Brutarian: *So does he ever tell you, as you're doing Dead Boys' songs in your set, whether you're better than Stiv. Or that you sound like Ig?*

TT: No, no, he's far too kind to play that game. He did tell me I'm the hardest rocking person out there today which was really nice coming from him. But more importantly, he just brings so much to an already great band we've put together. He did note, though, he said one night, "Wow, man, you could get a lot more pussy than Stiv, if you really wanted to." Which is great because I want fans of both sexes. That's what I really do it for: the fans. It means more to me than anything when people come up to me and tell me I'm the inspiration for them for starting a band or one thing or another. Real people get me, I think. But how do they get to find out about me? That's why I'm on tour. To get the word out

Brutarian: *Your stage persona is atavistic, abandoned, Dionysian, yet offstage you are rather quiet and unassuming. Is it a case, as Goethe says of living like a lamb in order to perform like the lion or maybe cheetah in this case?*

TT: The way I am on stage – dangerous, sexy, running the gamut of emotion from A to Z – that can be me offstage as well but you just can't be performing 24-7. Offstage, I'm basically a nice girl. I mean you don't want to try and take advantage of me but...

Brutarian: *You've said all the cool people are not fucked up on drugs and alcohol, do you really believe that? Terri, say it isn't so! We're going to have to stay straight and sober to get what you do?*

TT: Well, seriously, I can only really speak for myself. However, if pills and booze still worked for me, then I'd still be fucked up on drugs and alcohol. If I wanted to be whacked out and to be an asshole I'd still be abusing it all. A lot

of people need to get high or drunk to find inspiration or the courage or energy to become articulate or to become creative. I never really needed booze or pills to achieve intensity or to feel the...

Brutarian: ... the tug of the muse ...

TT: ... right! Now for a lot of people to get where I can get to naturally, they have to drink or pop pills or whatever. And I'd be at parties or people's houses and I'd be waiting and saying to myself, "OK, take what you have to get to where I'm at." And don't get me wrong, there was a time, in late adolescence, despite a fairly normal childhood...

Brutarian: *A normal childhood, you?*

TT: Oh yeah, straight As, went out for the cheerleading squad, a good girl. Played football with the boys. Hell, I was even voted most athletic in high school one year. Just like being one of the guys. In fact, I've always been one of the guys. Still, late in adolescence and for a while, I couldn't live without drugs or booze. But for the last thirteen and one half years I've been clean.

Brutarian: *That's just about your entire recording career. And yet during this time you were building your reputation with outrageous performances and outspoken interviews which, I'm sure, had people thinking you were higher than the moon.*

TT: But I wasn't, despite what the press may have made me out to be.

Brutarian: *Well, maybe since so many other rock performers noted for outrageousness and intense performances were substance abusers*

at one time or another – Jagger, Morrison, Iggy, Mama Cass ...

TT: Mama Cass?

Brutarian: *Just seeing if you were paying attention. No, she abused food not drugs as far as we know ...*

TT: And the press and most of the people in the audience, getting back to the substance abuse thing, thought this whacky chick is totally whacked out but I wasn't. What I often do, though, to achieve a certain level of intensity of performance is to return in my mind to those drug-addled days and, in going there, reach a certain level of abandon.

Brutarian: *Equivalent to the method acting technique of relying on "sense memories."*

TT: Exactly, so perhaps that's why writers and fans and folks at the performances think I'm fucked up, because in a sense I am. I'm just not on anything. It's funny but I know from having done a lot of work on myself that when people see me being me and think that I'm a little crazy then I'm fine. It's when I'm not so full of energy, when I'm not writing songs and being creative that I am crazy. Living life, moment to moment. Living it to the fullest and not holding back, that's sanity, man. It's also inspirational for a lot of people, especially women who run up to me all the time and say, "God, I wish I could do what you do." Well, it starts with not holding back to having the confidence to go with your creative impulses and kicking aside the self-doubts.

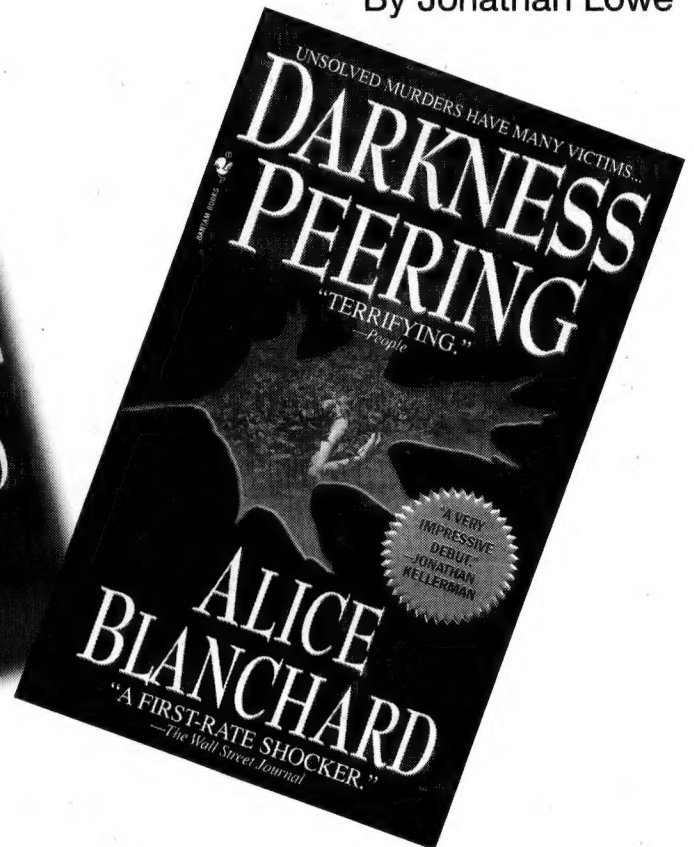
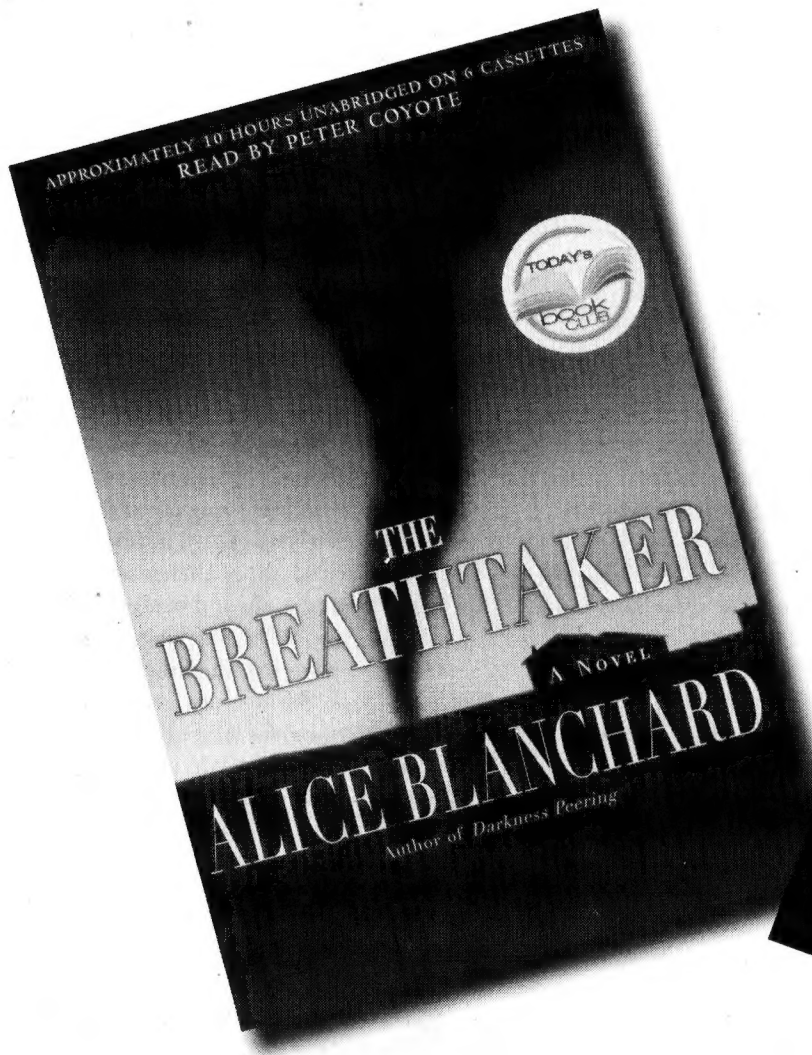


Talking Books

With Novelist

**Alice
Blanchard**

By Jonathan Lowe



*A*lice Blanchard won the Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Fiction for her book of stories, "The Stuntman's Daughter." Other awards include a PEN Syndicated Fiction Award, a New Letters Literary Award, and a Centrum Artists in Residence Fellowship. Her stories have appeared in many literary publications, and she

was also heard on National Public Radio's "The Sound of Writing." The author of "Darkness Peering," read by Patricia Kalember for Random House Audio, Alice has a phenomenal new novel out titled "The BreathTaker," also read by Peter Coyote for Time Warner Audiobooks. She lives with her husband in Los Angeles.

JONATHAN LOWE: Welcome, Alice. Now, you're no stranger to literary awards. But what influenced you starting out as a writer, and how did you make the transition from writing stories to writing novels?

ALICE BLANCHARD: Some of my early influences were the short stories of Raymond Carver, John Updike and Stephen Crane. These writer's stories were not only beautifully written, but demanded an emotional response. The short story is exceptionally hard to master. It requires an unusual discipline and attention to character, atmosphere and epiphany. My stories tended to be 25 pages or longer, and people often commented that I should write a novel. Eventually that idea took hold. So for me, writing short stories was an incubation process for writing novels.

The image that inspired "Darkness Peering" came from my childhood. I grew up in New England farm country, where there were all these run-off ponds, and for some reason I had an image of a dead girl lying in a run-off pond. It disturbed me and wouldn't let go. At the same time, I was intrigued by a moral question: what would you do if somebody you loved turned out to have done something very bad? Would you turn them in? Would you believe them incapable of evil? What if you were wrong?

LOWE: The two things that impressed me most about your new novel "The Breathalyzer" was the original yet believable twist on the serial killer subgenre, and the narrative drive of the story, which never bogs down long enough to lose the reader, but rather offers him or her "breathing" space while pushing the story ahead. First, how did you arrive at this plot vehicle for your characters?

BLANCHARD: The idea came to me very organically. My husband

and I were driving cross-country from New England to Los Angeles, and I fell in love with Oklahoma. The sky opened up, the land flattened out, an occasional farmhouse floated by in a sea of wheat. As we were driving through the center of the state, I noticed a dramatic split in the sky--methyl green below, dark green above. Then a hard rain came. We were in flash-flood territory. A stream rose quickly to road level, so we pulled into a gift shop and asked what was happening. The store owner told us there was a Tornado Watch. We left an hour later and drove across the Texas Panhandle under a fading sky, but Oklahoma haunted me for months afterwards. I just knew I had to write about it.

LOWE: Were you influenced by movies like "Twister" or "Hard Rain"?

BLANCHARD: "The Breathalyzer" began with a simple idea, actually--the landscape of Oklahoma. The land and the people I met there haunted me. I then got an idea about a family that was being torn apart from the inside out. A husband and wife with a teenage daughter are in the middle of a crisis when the storm comes. I wrote the scene . . . the scene turned into a chapter, the chapter into many chapters.

LOWE: What kind of research did you do for the story?

BLANCHARD: After I wrote the book, I went back and did the research in order to make sure I was accurate. I was surprised to find out how often I was right about a certain fact, although I had to learn an enormous amount.

LOWE: Why do you think people chase storms?

BLANCHARD: My sense is that most storm-chasers are adrenaline junkies and also very intellectually curious. I think the people who track tornadoes are similar in some ways to detectives who hunt down serial killers. With "The Breathalyzer," I was struck by the idea that a homicide can rip through a family the way a tornado rips through a town. Both leave devastation in their wake, both leave many victims. There is a desire to know more, to find out why these things happen, to bear witness to such events that are beyond our control.

LOWE: Charlie Grover's past emotionally affects his presence in the story, and points to a suspect. What are your thoughts about him?

BLANCHARD: For Charlie Grover, I had an image of a cop with burn scars over a third of his body. I liked the idea that, because of an old tragedy, a fire, he wore his loss and pain right there on his body. He couldn't hide it from the world the way most of us can. It was there for everyone to see. I like a hero who has it all out there and has to deal with it and can't run away from it. I think the whole trick to writing a novel is finding a character or

characters you're obsessed with. If you are obsessed with an idea or character, then something true and meaningful will spring from it.

"The Breathalyzer began with a simple idea, actually--the landscape of Oklahoma."

LOWE: Time Warner Audio did a great job on the audio version, and Dennis Kao told me that they took the time to add sound effects because they enjoyed it so much, and thought it would work well here. Did you think, as I do, that the effects aided the story unobtrusively? And what did you think of Peter Coyote's performance?

BLANCHARD: I think they did an amazing job. I greatly admire Peter Coyote as an actor, and I thought he was just brilliant.

LOWE: This sounds almost like an audio movie, and in ways is better than "Twister" because it substitutes a mystery/suspense element where there's only an inane rivalry in the movie. Any thoughts on audiobooks as a medium, in an age when more people find themselves stuck in traffic longer, and in all kinds of weather?

BLANCHARD: I'm from Los Angeles where traffic jams are the norm. I have a lot of friends who are into audiobooks due to long commutes, and I think it's great. When I was little, my grandfather would quote whole sections of "Alice in Wonderland" to my sisters and me. He took us up to his creaky old attic and let us pick out these very

old, illustrated books to keep. He taught me that books were special, and for me, there's nothing like the smell and feel of a brand new book, and there's nothing like having a book read to you, either. Although I haven't heard many audiobooks in the past, I intend to listen to more in the future.

LOWE: Any movie plans for your novels?

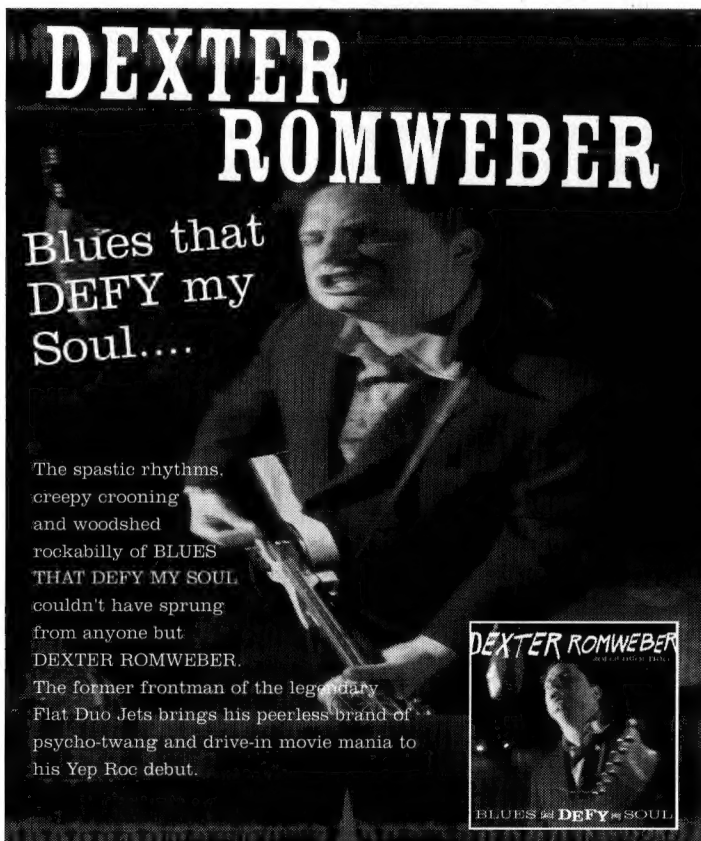
BLANCHARD: At one time "Darkness Peering" was optioned by USA Films, with Diane Keaton attached to direct. Currently, though, Warner Brothers-based John Wells Productions is in the process of writing a screenplay based on "The Breathmaker." They did "West Wing" and "ER," as well as "White Oleander" and other films.

LOWE: That's great news. What's next for you?

BLANCHARD: Regarding my next suspense novel, all I can tell you is that there's a different cast of characters, it's set in a whole new locale, and I'm very excited about it. I love to write about normal, everyday people who are just scraping by, doing their jobs, going about their business, trying to be good mothers or fathers, who unexpectedly encounter an obstacle, something hugely life-threatening or overwhelming, and must be braver or stronger than they ever imagined possible. We all hope we can rise above who we are. Real challenge, big conflict, can bring out our heroic side, and I'm interested in that.

LOWE: Thanks for keeping us interested too, Alice.

(Jonathan Lowe is author of "Fame Island," read by actor Kristoffer Tabori for BlackstoneAudio.com)



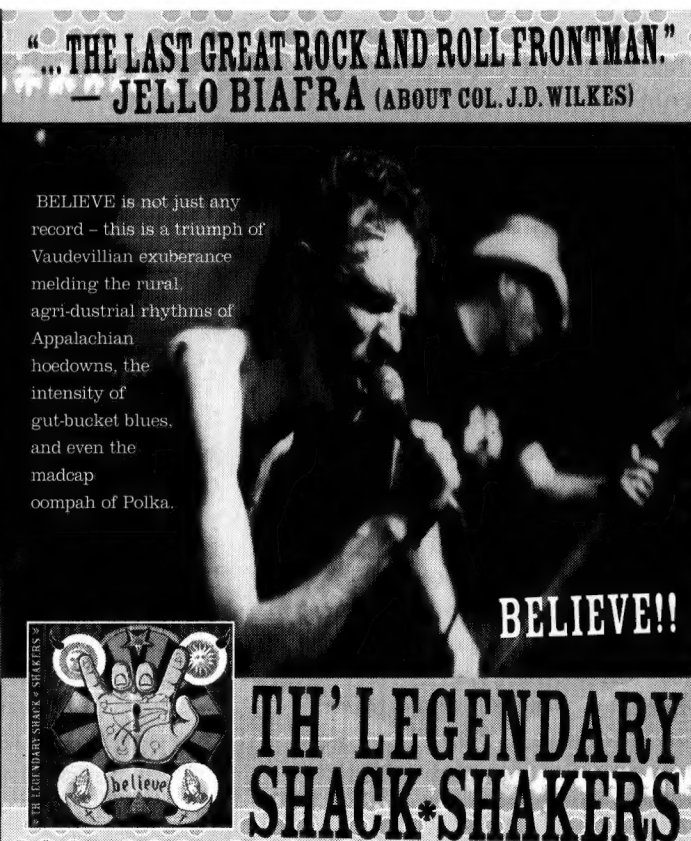
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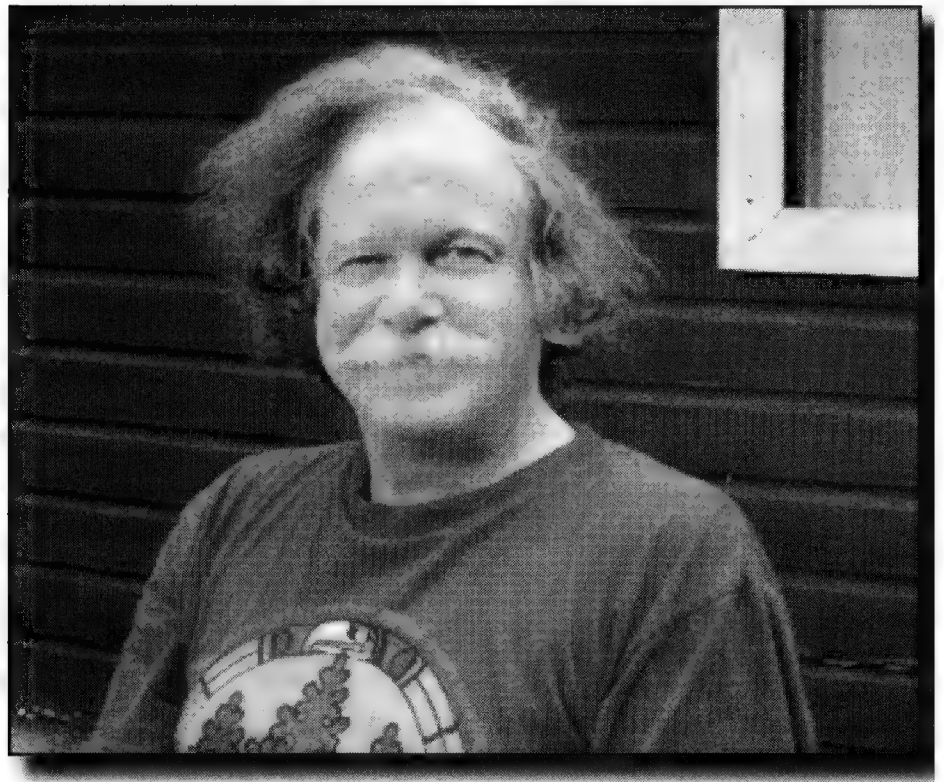
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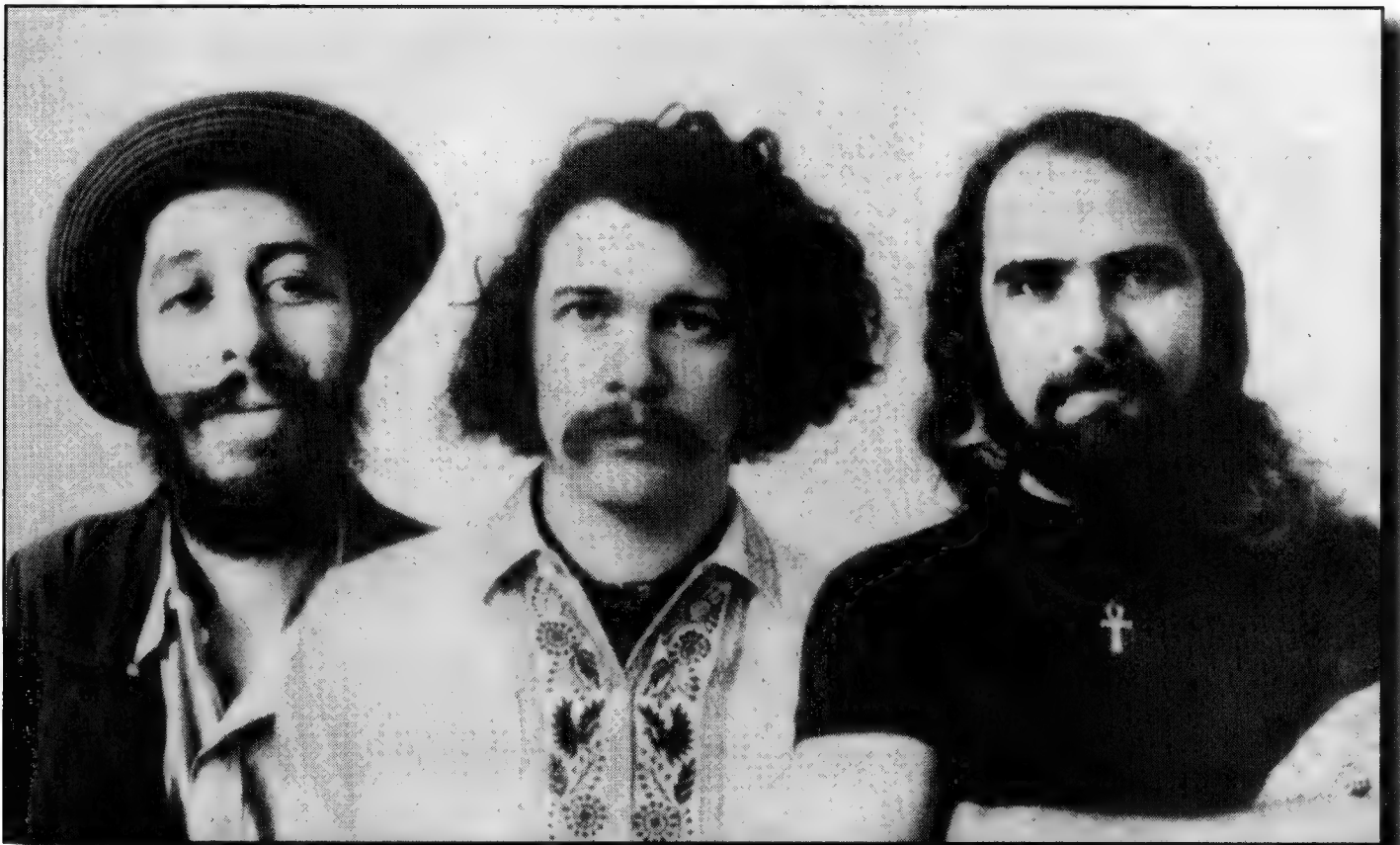
A Talk with Ed Sanders of The Fugs

By Holly Day



Before there were punk rockers, hippies, or even really garage rockers, there were The Fugs. Raucous, sarcastic, wickedly clever and brilliantly hilarious, the music team of East village poets Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg transcended the Beat Movement that spawned them and hurdled them through the '60s, where their music somehow managed to crack the Top 100 LP charts at the same time Lenny Bruce was in jail for obscenity. The duo officially split up in the '70s, but still managed to get together for Fugs reunion concerts on a nearly annual basis. The backing musical line-up has changed over the years, but Sanders and Kupferberg have remained at the group's core, writing songs about whatever happens to be taboo at the present, from sex to political activism and social dissidence to drugs and erectile dysfunction.

The Fugs newest LP, *The Fugs Final CD (Part 1)*, features Sanders, Kupferberg, Steve Taylor on guitar, Coby Batty on percussion, and Scott Petito on keys—the same lineup that was featured on 1986's *No More Slavery*, itself their first LP in nearly two decades. The album, out on Artemis Records, is classic Fugs with an older perspective: instead of songs about having sex, as they so scandalously and frankly did in the 1960s, the new album contains songs about not being able to get it up (see "Septuagenarian in Love"). The angry young men definitely still have their



The core trio of the Fugs, in the 1960s. Left to right: Tuli Kupferberg, Ed Sanders, Ken Weaver.
Credit: Michael Ochs Archives.com

edge as cranky old men, and rake the current political scene through the coals in the equally scathing, witty "Go Down Congress" and "Government Surveillance Yodel."

Just for the record, this interview took place just weeks before the 2004 election, with Sanders being comfortably optimistic about the outcome of the Bush/Kerry election. With his knack for prescience in the past, one wonders exactly how dead-on he is in suspecting something being corrupt with "W"'s re-election.

Holly: What have you been doing for the past 15+ years in between the release of No More Slavery and The Fugs Final CD (Part 1)?

Ed Sanders: Well, I've edited a newspaper with my wife called The Woodstock Journal for eight years. The Woodstock Journal is an alternative biweekly. I've begun writing a history of the United States on poetry form called America: History and Verse. I've had three books published—right now,

I'm covering the 20th century in poetry form. And The Fugs have had reunions every two, three, four years, and we put out live CDs based on these reunion concerts. This is the first Fugs studio album since 1985. We put it out in reaction to a couple of things. One was the 2000 elections, because it was such a strange situation, and then, of course, 9/11. We decided that things are very temporary in the world right now, like dried roses in the road, and we thought we'd make a final CD, but we didn't want to paint ourselves into a corner, so we called it, The Fugs' Final CD (Part 1). It's a mix of social and X-rated commentary, and there's at least one song that can't be played on the radio. But most of it is politics. We have a poem by Charles Bukowski and we have a yodeling song dedicated to John Ashcroft, who we thought needed our attention.

H: So what inspired you to write the America: A History In Verse series?

E: Well, I began in 1998 on New Years' Day. I was reading William Blake's America, which he never published during his lifetime, but it had some material about George Washington. And it just occurred to me, reading Blake's America, that that might be an interesting project, to do a history of.

the United States in verse. I had done, for instance, preceding that, I had done 1968: A History in Verse, and I'd also written a verse biography of Anton Chekov, so I sort of prepared myself for those books. And so I began. My publisher, Black Sparrow, agreed to publish the books, so I wrote Vol. One—I decided to start with the 20th Century, so that I could cover the years, a lot of the years that I'd actually lived through. I've always clipped articles about current events, things that interest me, almost my whole life, so I had a lot of files already. I have thousands of clippings filed away on different subjects about American history. I'm working on Volume 4 right now, which will cover the Nixon years, from '71-'74, and then the Ford years, and then the Carter years, '76-'80, and then the first part of the Reagan era. Volume 4 will cover 1971 through 1985. I don't know—it's difficult to know why you pick a project. I didn't know it was going to be nine volumes, but it will be nine volumes. I have them all in draft form, and I'll take it all the way back to 1450, you know, the Portuguese slave collectors and early explorers, and then trace it all the way back to the year 2000.

H: How do you decide what information about these years goes into the books?

E: I read a lot, I do computer chronologies, and I try to weave all the information together. It's a weaving, it's like a tapestry, a spoken word tapestry, in a way. I select things that are archetypal or interesting or key cultural events. So each year, I look at new inventions. You know, the 20th century is just filled with medical and scientific inventions of all kinds, so I followed those, and mathematical and physics breakthroughs, like quarks, and black holes, things like that, neutrinos and subatomic particles, but I also follow movies and books and cultural uprisings—like the next volume will feature a lot of the triumph of the Women's Movement, beginning in the early '70s—although I think it actually began in the late '60s but didn't really burst into power until the early '70s. So I try to look for currents, archetypal flows of information that make sense, and that give the essence, you know, because I can't include everything. The Oxford History of the United States is something like 28 volumes long, and it's just huge. You could write a history of Canada, say, that if you stretched it out it would reach from here to the moon, if you cut the pages out. It's a very data-retentive era, and because of data bases and libraries and CDs and information systems that you can get on-line, you could write a history of each, you could write a history of each year that was 10,000 pages long. So you have to edit it down. You have to say, "no". You have to say "no" a lot

more than you get to say "yes." So I read all the time. I collect information, I study day and night. I was just at a bookstore, where we bought some more books that I can read to get information. It's like gold mining, when you sift sand, looking for little fragments.

H: Do you think poetry is becoming important again?

E: Poetry is the most intimate way to describe the universe. It is the way to come closest to direct observation of what it is that's happening to us, and what we are doing. So yeah, I think it's—well, firstly, in the United States, there are poetry scenes, so to speak, poetry networks, poetry coffeehouses, slams, and poetry series. In every college town in the U.S., there are thousands of open mics and thousands of reading series. Every college brings in poets and novelists to read and perform. In the little town where I live, Woodstock, there are like two or three poetry reading series, and there must be a hundred poets that live here. And that's all over the place. So it's different than when I a kid, when you had to go to New York or Vancouver or San Francisco—you had to go to a big city to find a poetry scene. Now, all you have to do is go down and look for the nearest coffeeshop that has a microphone and a reading series, and they're everywhere, and then you find a poetry scene. You don't have to go to the coasts to be a poet now in America. So I think it's somewhat more important in numbers. It's always been important spiritually and intellectually and ethically.

H: Did you try to participate in the Laura Bush Day of Poetry that she tried to put on a couple of years ago?

E: No. I think I sent a poem in to Sam Hamill for his Poets Against the War series. That's right around the time that I wrote my poem called "Impeach George Bush." Now, I think he should be impeached. It's not that he's dumb—he just doesn't deserve to be president of a great nation.

H: How out of touch could Laura Bush be to invite poets to come read at the White House after her husband took our country to war?

E: Well, they're like members of Mötley Crüe or something. They're like members of a rock band. I know. I was in a rock band. You get into this little shell, this little world, where you're surrounded by your PR people, and your road crew, and your fans, and you lose track of the bigger picture. And that's where the Bushies are. They're like spoiled, right-wing rock stars. She just didn't think it through. First

of all, they're not known for their thinking ability, you know? It's like in a chess game. The Bush people, they can play chess, but they can only think one or two moves ahead. So she thought, "Well, let's get poets together here for National Poetry Month! All right!" But they didn't realize that the American poets, for sure—for instance, American poets, all in all, were totally against the Vietnam War. They were totally against the first Gulf War. Poets made anthologies and gave readings all over the United States against the Gulf War of 1990-1991, so why wouldn't they be opposed to Bush's War just now? She just didn't have what they call "street-smarts," because they're right-wing rock stars. Motley Bush is the name of their band.

H: So what has kept you so involved in politics and social reform for so long?

E: Well, I decided to go out in a blaze of leaflets. I decided not to let America—my country is a wonderful country, but it's a little too violent, so I'm not too interested in warfare, which is the big debate going on here right now, and always has been for a long time in the United States. Why do we have so many wars? Anyway, I decided I was an activist—in the 60s, I was involved in a lot of Civil Rights activities and peace walks. I tried to board a Polaris submarine as a nuclear war protestor, which landed me in jail. But I just decided to keep my hand in and to print things and to write poetry that takes a stand. Basically, I'm a social democrat, I'm what they call in Europe, "Center-left," which means I'm for a mixed economy and that the government has to take a stance for regular working people and have national healthcare and pensions and take care of workers, you know, clean water, clean air, for healthy foods and healthy people. But to do that, you always have to write leaflets and go to meetings and raise your voice. In the United States, you have to stand up all the time, or the right wing will turn the country into a slave-ocracy. There's the unfortunate archetype that's prevalent here in America: the raving, red-faced, racist cracker, and they are poised, always, to completely take over America.

H: So how do you see the next election turning out?

E: Well, Kerry'll win, unless they steal the election. There are 60,000 electronic voting machines for which there is no paper trail, or no way to check the results, so they could steal it that way. Or there's still the intimidation of black voters, especially in places like Florida, and Tennessee, and Missouri. There was a memo published recently about Detroit, where they said they would like to keep the black vote down, which is probably the only way "The Shrub"

could win Michigan, is to keep the black vote down in Detroit. But if they don't steal the election, Kerry will win, maybe even comfortably. But we'll see. If something should happen to poor Cheney, Bush might bring in a more charismatic running mate to bring in more votes. Cheney looks kind of terminal. He doesn't look well.

I did a contest for my WoodstockJournal.com Web site in July '04, for poets to submit their concepts of what an October surprise might be. I got like, 50 answers from Poets all over the United States, and abroad, and there were some interesting concepts of what the Republicans might do. I mean, if they sense that they might lose, God knows what they would try. People are so afraid right now. One terrorist-linked incident somewhere, and that's all it'll take. But you know, it's such a state to have to think that your president and his henchmen might try a terror act just to stay in office. It's so horrible to have to think that, but it's valid. I think they're capable of doing almost anything. They're looking to militarize space, to send nuclear weapons up into orbit, to seize other countries, to invade Iran, take Syria—you know, just more and more warfare. Because, you know, let's say the Americans bomb, say, Toronto, Canada, to smithereens. Then they could give contracts out to build Toronto back. That way, the country makes money bombing them, and then you make billions and billions building Toronto back. And that's exactly what happened to Iraq. They bombed them, then Halliburton makes billions building those suckers back up. Bomb 'em down and build 'em up—that's a good way to make money.

But George Bush is so dumb, I don't think he knows where his foot is. He's shooting blindly around the perimeter of his foot, and he can almost hit it. No, I think, as it has always happened in the past, the right wing will overstep, and the people—it's true what they say, you can't fool the people forever, and sooner or later, disaster will hit the pocketbooks of enough Americans that they'll do something about it. If anything, people are going to try to make that electronic voting honest in this upcoming election. That's one of the biggest dangers facing us right now, touch screen voting is questionable, and that what happened in Florida could happen on a national scale. It's not hard to figure out how computer systems are set up, and conceivably, someone could tamper with the voting computers seconds before voting commences and pass up all the safeguards that are supposed to be put in place. Big city corruption is everywhere, and I think its next big target is the voting machines. We also need to guard our liberal senators as never before, to avoid what happened to Minnesota senator Paul

Wellstone. The whole thing was very suspect to me. I understand that the plane Wellstone was on was one of those that were used to fly generals through snowstorms in the Balkans, so it's very suspicious to me that his plane supposedly crashed due to weather conditions. It joins all those other strange deaths in America. Ironically, Wellstone's death has made him greater than he was in life, because people now realize that without someone like him in office, you can't count on a dissenting voice in issues like war, and education, and elderly care. You have to lose something like that to realize the horror of the loss.

H: Things might be a little different now if Wellstone was still alive.

E: Well, if Robert Kennedy had become President in '68, the Vietnam War would have ended much earlier than it did, and 50,000 American kids, and a million Vietnamese, would have been spared carpet bombing, and napalm, and defoliation, and fragmentation bombs. So yeah, bullets adjust history, sometimes, in terrible ways.

H: Have you seen Fahrenheit 9/11 yet?

E: No, I did not see it. I was on the road when it came out. I'd like to, but I hear it's really graphic, and I can't stomach anything graphic. Which is ironic, in a way, because *The Family*, the book I wrote about Charlie Manson and the Manson Family, is very graphic. It's hard for me to even read my own book. It has a lot of descriptions of murders and stuff, which I don't really like to read.

H: So was that a hard book to write for you?

E: It was, but I felt I had to write it. 30 years ago, there was a certain amount of sympathy for the Manson group in the counterculture, and in the alternate cultures, so I wanted to show exactly what these people had done, so there wouldn't be that much sympathy. And it sort of worked. They mooched, and took advantage of many alternate lifestyle aspects, and then added to it murder, which was a very hideous and unfortunate development. It kind of helped kill the growth of the counterculture back then.

H: I think it's amazing that Charles Manson gets treated like a superstar every time he does a TV interview, even now.

E: Well, there was a court decision that allows him to have regular access to the media. Every time he has a court date, like a parole hearing or something, he is allowed to do interviews—

something like that. Plus, I think he can make collect calls. I know he records albums this way. He gets on the phone and sings stuff to people, and they tape it and put it out. He makes a tremendous amount of money every year. The police told me he makes something like a quarter of a million dollars a year selling devil pictures. He makes these scorpion dolls and voodoo dolls, too, which his followers sell for him. So he's rich.

H: He still has followers?

E: Well, he's the darling of the devil-worshipping crowd. Look, if you're a Catholic boy in the Midwest, and you want to upset your parents, then you tack a photo of Marilyn Manson, or Charlie Manson, up in your room. I don't know, He seems to have "caught on," as they say. He's the ultimate loser. I mean, he wanted to be a star, he wanted to be a rock'n'roll star, and he failed miserably, and then took his vengeance on people in the entertainment business.

H: So what originally made you make the leap from writing poetry to performing in a band?

E: Well, it goes way back, before many of our fans were born. We came out of the Civil Rights Movement in the '60s. When I was a kid, we all sang, all the time. Everybody had guitars, everybody knew the civil rights songs, and we all sang, all the time. I had gone down to civil rights marches, and I'd been exposed to a lot of the singing, and Tuli [Kupferberg], who was my next-door-neighbor at the time, in '64-'65, also knew a lot of songs from the Labor Movement and the Anarchist Movement. And then there was rock'n'roll that had come—The Beatles had just come in '64 with "I Want to Hold Your Hand," and that was the year of the Shangri-La's "The Leader of the Pack" and Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman," and it seemed like music, popular music mixed with the Civil Rights movement and poetry could happen. So we decide to form this little band just to have fun. And somehow, we became popular. We started playing theaters in New York City, and we started putting out records, with no idea then, 39 years ago, that anybody would be interested in us in 2004. We have more albums out now than we would have dreamed of when we were wild young men. Things have changed a lot since we started out, too. There's more freedom for some things, a less for others. Only two of our songs on the current CD can be played before midnight on radio stations—the "F-U-C-K" word can't be sung, but you can say "ass" on TV. I think that's kind of weird. And if we were on HBO, we could say anything we want. They couldn't read script from *The Sopranos*

on FM radio, but they can show *The Sopranos* on HBO. It's kind of a double standard here. Actually, if we'd sung *The Sopranos* scripts back in '65, we'd still be in jail. It's funny—you can say things in America, but you can't sing them. America's still very conservative about what you can sing.

H: Coming from the folk scene yourselves, what did you think of the whole hippie-free-love scene?

E: Well, it was good while it lasted. Unfortunately, strange diseases were being spread. However, there was no penicillin-resistant gonorrhea or syphilis, there was no AIDS, and there wasn't really any herpes being spread. There were no STDs that couldn't be contained. Women had just won their right to use birth control pills, and diaphragms were just becoming widely used in the counter-culture. So young women, I think for the first time in America, felt they could explore their erotic side freely without facing the dire consequences of previous generations, i.e. having a baby or having to go to a back street abortionist. In short, there was a lot of partying going on back then, and there was a spirit of liberation and freedom in the hippie culture that was wonderful. I mean, it had its up and downs. Nowadays, people are more suspicious and wary of STDs, of getting bumped off in bed (laughs).

H: With your Second Album, there are a couple of songs on there that seems almost more sexually sarcastic than sexually free.

E: Like "Group Grope?" By the way, I have never received royalties for coining the term "group grope." It entered the culture because of that satirical song. Well, it was half humor, half satire. It was the first orgasm recorded by a rock group at the time. It wasn't the last, for sure.

H: How well are you remembered after so long?

E: We're surprised, actually. We've had no trouble selling out shows. We're just amazed that there's so much interest in us after 38 years. But we also believe that an art ensemble like us could possibly last 50-60 years. We're entering the end of our fourth decade as an ensemble, and we're hoping to keep performing our music until the country sees the end of George Bush. So hopefully, he gets out of office soon, and somebody a little more enlightened will come along and America can get back on track.

H: So do you think people are easier to shock now than they were 30-40 years ago, or do you think Americans are more jaded now?

E: More jaded. There's a lot more violence in art now than when I was growing up. There's a lot of slaughter in movies, there're a lot of people being murdered, and there are lots of images of violence. So yeah, more jaded. And of course I think it's good for people to get used to erotic imagery—I mean, you watch HBO these days, and there's a tremendous amount of erotic freedom on the tube. But I don't like so much violence. I couldn't believe it when they showed Saddam Hussein's children on the television, when they showed those dead bodies on the tube. I can't even watch the opening credits to *Terminator 2*, you know, with the robots crushing all those skulls? I don't like the skull-crushing robots in the movie. I can't watch that. I guess I'm old-fashioned. I believe in freedom, but I don't think people know what to do with their freedom. People are so jaded now, and the rimes are very Romanesque. It's very much like ancient Rome, where they want more and more of everything, more stimuli, more things that startle us, frighten us, titillate us. But what we don't want is public executions. We don't want heads cut off and put on pikes and paraded around the city square, so there are limits to what we should feel free to do—very, I think, reasonable limits. Lenny Bruce once said if you give people total freedom, then someone will run over babies and charge admission. So you don't want that level of freedom.

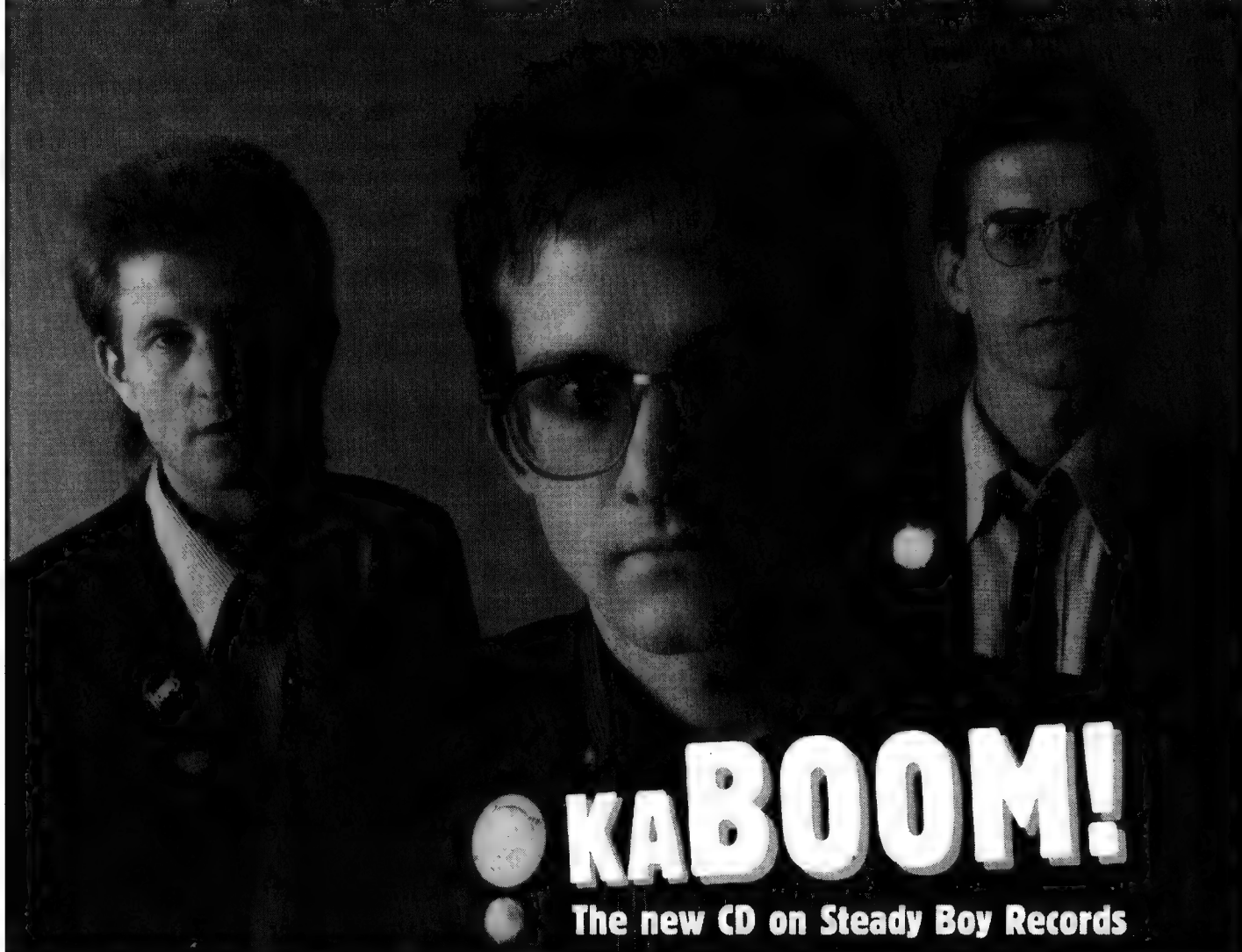
H: Do you always just sing on the album or do you play any instruments?

E: On the album, I mostly sing. I like to invent instruments. I have this thing called the Talking Tie, that's like a tie but it plays music. I invented it just before Laurie Anderson came out with her musical suit. I invent instruments, I play the piano, and I play stringed instruments. I write a lot of *The Fugs* music myself, and I have a recording studio in my house, where I have digital equipment, various sequencers I write on. I write a lot of tunes on these new music sequencers. I'm pretty high tech. I also have a great old pump organ in my house, and we have a piano, and a bunch of smaller organs, and a guitar, and a dulcimer. My house is full of musical instruments.

H: Have you ever thought of marketing the Talking Tie?

E: Yeah, I thought of it. It'd be good for business lunches. You could play a melody while you're trying to close down a deal for, well, jet parts. Yeah, I ought to. But, you know, I'm not that great a capitalist. Like I said, I'm more of a social democrat.

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Genesis



If ever a person has tried to live life as exactly as one has wanted, it's been Genesis P-Orridge. There are few people in the world of music or pop culture in general that have exerted the kind of influence or inspired the types of controversy that P-Orridge has. Perhaps best known as the founder of the bands Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV, P-Orridge the musician has challenged his listeners countless times to try to pin down his definition of

P-Orridge

By Holly Day

what music truly is. P-Orridge was also an important figure in the construction of the rave scene in England, and, after being chased away from Brighton, England, after unsubstantiated charges of satanism and child abuse springing from his creation of the magical order of The Temple of Psychick Youth brought several raids down on his home, moved to San Francisco and helped foster the rave culture there.

These days, the sexagenarian Genesis P-Orridge is just as controversial a figure as always. Along with his wife, Lady Jaye, Genesis is currently undergoing various surgical procedures and mental reconditioning to redefine his/her sexuality. Musically, s/he and Psychic TV have undergone a reformation as well, and the new PTV3 is currently on tour with a bunch of new material and ideals to spread willy-nilly around the

globe. Along with the reformation of Psychic TV comes the re-release of much of the Psychic TV back catalog—remastered by Genesis—starting with the re-release of 1985's *Godstar: Thee Director's Cut* by Psychic TV, the score Psychic TV composed for a project that never came to fruition: *Godstar*, a movie based on the life of the Rolling Stones' Brian Jones.

H: Where did the name Genesis P-Orridge come from?

G: Oh, that question again? It was 1965, and quite a lot of my school friends went to a party together. I couldn't go to the party, and they decided, when they were a bit stoned, to play a game. So they wrote down the names of all the people they knew on one column, and then they put Biblical names next to them that they felt were appropriate. And they put Genesis next to my name. And it was the only one that stuck. And that became first my nickname and then I started to sign poetry and artwork and paintings with "Genesis," and it just stayed.

That was in '65. Then, after I dropped out of University in 1969, I spent part of my time living on somebody's kitchen table, because I had no money, and the only thing I could afford to eat was porridge. So whenever people did see me, which wasn't very often—I only weighed about 85 pounds at that point—they only saw me eating porridge. And one of the people whose apartment it was was this kind of beatnick poet-type named J-, and he came in really drunk and high on LSD one night, and said, "Your name's not just Genesis—it's Genesis P-Orridge, and the P stands for Willow, but it's spelled Pillow." He was in this really aggressive and angry mood, even though he was high, so I just said, "Okay, J-, yes, it's P-Orridge." And that was it.

And then in 1970, I decided that since everyone knew me as Genesis P-Orridge, and no one really knew my original name anymore, that I might as well do it legally, and make it more exciting, just to see what happens when you did it with bureaucracy. I went to see a lawyer, and the lawyer said, "That's hilarious! I'll do it for free!" So I changed it legally in 1970. So that's the name on my passports and everything. That's my actual name.

H: So what drew you to music and being in a band?

G: Well, my father was in bands when he was young, before World War II. He was a drummer in jazz bands, so I grew up around drum kits and I started playing the drums when I was three or four years old. And I took piano lessons and I was in the cathedral choir in Stockport, so I used to do all that complicated medieval singing in the church, wearing those red and white robes. I was a pretty little choir boy. Innocent, I was (giggles maniacally).

So I started out listening to loads of jazz. I used to see Duke Ellington and Buddy Rich and Count Basie and those bands when they came to town—I lived in Manchester still—but then I started hearing records by the Rolling Stones sometime around 1962, and I thought that was fantastic. So I became a Rolling Stones fan first—in the days when Brian Jones was still in the band, and they doing interesting songs for the time. There was a pirate radio station called Radio London, and then there was another one called Radio Luxembourg that was coming out of Europe, and they were the only ones to play new, modern music, and my friends and I would listen to these stations almost exclusively.

One day, one of my friends called Spidey came up and said, “You’re going to have to buy this album by this band called the Velvet Underground. You’ll just love it.” So I did. I bought it the day it came out, The Velvet Underground and Nico, and that was the really, really sort of liberating moment for me. I’d already started listening to John Coltrane and John Cage and started to lose interest in form in its traditional way, and then I heard the Velvet Underground with the electric viola and I was smitten. Smitten with the possibilities. And also the fact that the lyrics weren’t just “I love you, you love me, you don’t love me anymore.” It was more like journalism. The lyric was liberated, too, in many ways. It also gave me the sense that you could actually take any, any topic at all, and it was valid to become some form of song where the lyrics were a piece of music.

H: How did that background translate into what you did with Throbbing Gristle?

G: Well, when I was still in school from 1966 to 1968, I already recorded lots of tapes. I started recording tapes when I was 10, doing cut-ups and loops and feedback and so and so. I was already utilizing tape recorders as instruments from the age of 10 on. I’d do that pretty much every other day—all the time, I was experimenting with tape. And then in 1969, I joined a performance art group in London. When I left University, I went to London and joined this group called The Exploding Galaxy. Actually, a book just came out about them. It was like a psycho-therapeutic commune of artists, so it was very much to do with challenging anything that was normally accepted. For example, if somebody was still using the original name that they got when they were born, people’d say, “Well, why have you still got that name?” and then, “Why have you got hair?” and “Why have you not got hair?” “Why do you eat with a knife and fork?” and “Why do you eat?” and “Why do you eat that?” It was a kind of constant questioning of things, that nothing had to be the way it was last time. That was a really good discipline.

From that experience, I ended up doing my own performance artwork with Coum Transmissions, which was very much in the art world, and that was the material that it was about. Eventually, it became to do with transgression and sexual taboos, identity as a fictional narrative, the idea that male and female were really as arbitrary as anything else. I basically took the earlier ideas of The Exploding Galaxy and became even more rigorous with them, really, in a sense, chopping up every aspect of consensus reality and then reassembling it in unexpected ways. Very much a collage approach, but to one’s own personality and one’s own world. So we would invent characters, like cartoon character ideas, and then make a costume and then live that character, and you would have to answer questions in the voice of the character, from the point of view of the character, and walk and behave like the character, and you might do that for

several days until you switched costumes, and you’d have to be somebody else, and go into that character. It was very tough, but it was fascinating. Some people literally had sort of semi-nervous breakdowns because they were unable to let go of all their preconceptions. But a lot of people are still in touch with me that with through that process with me, and it was incredibly positive for them in terms of dealing with all sorts of aspects of their lives since. They’re really good at focusing on the real issues, and improvising and being very pragmatic. It’s given them a real strength in that area.

So that was what was going on from ’69 to 1975, and then in 1975, with Coum Transmissions, we’d started adding in sound, tape collages and ambient sound tracks and bits of newspaper reports, bits of television news, to emphasize aspects of the performance art pieces. And there were four of us at that point: there was Sleazy, Cosey, Chris, and myself. And we just started to become more and more interested in the power of music and its ability to have a direct effect on the mind and body. So we started to look at Tibetan music, where they use certain frequencies to release endorphins, and ritual tribal music where they used specific patterns of drumming to induce trance states, and thought we had found a way to do that kind of music, but make it totally relevant to modern post-War and pre-technological society. We wanted to find a way to do an equivalent tribal music for European industrial culture. And so that’s what we started to experiment with first in our basement. We built our own speakers, we built all our own amps. Chris even built his own synthesizers and effects pedals. We started to just experiment with rhythms and loops and noises, and record everything, and listen back to it and whichever bits we just felt we liked we would see if we could copy them and do it more than once. So for the whole of 1975, we did that for 3 or 4 days a week, just constantly experimenting with sound, and building equipment.

One day, I was walking through the park in Hackney in London with my friend [and future Psychic TV guitarist] Montè

Cazazza, and we were talking about the music, the Throbbing Gristle music, and I was saying, "We've got to have a name for this music. There's already dada and surrealism in art movements, and this is, in a way, a music movement, or it could be, so it has to have a name." Because it always makes things more effective when you inject them into popular culture—it's just one of those facts of life. So we were walking on, and I was throwing all these ideas at Monte, and I said, "Well, we could call it 'factory', because of Andy Warhol, but really it's more about industrial society," and I was saying all these things, and he said, "Gen, you keep saying 'industrial.' That's obviously what it's meant to be." And so it was him that pointed out to me that I was stating the obvious, and I hadn't really realized it, and that was the first time that music was called "industrial music." Which is unusual, very, very unusual, if not unique, to have a new genre of music named consciously, and know the day that it happened, which was the 3rd of September, 1975. From there on, there was industrial music—before, there wasn't.

And now, of course, people all over the world use the term "industrial" to refer to music, and a goodly number of them don't even think about the fact that once upon a time, it didn't exist, or how it became named thus, and what it was intended to represent. In fact, I've had people actually say to me, young people in St. Mark's, that I was lying, that there had always been industrial music. I could slap them! Just check your history books! It's one of the sad sides of modern media, especially television media, VH1 and MTV in particular, that they've deliberately miswritten the history of music. I mean, I don't know about you, but I don't see a VH1 "Behind the Music" on the Velvet Underground, or Captain Beefheart, or all kinds of groups that were very significant to an awful lot of people. Or even of the famous punk bands. They've also never ever mentioned Throbbing Gristle or hardly ever mention Nine Inch Nails anymore. It's a very, very skewed and twisted interpretation of what popular music is,

and it seems quite possible that they're very, very deliberately rewriting the story of music, because that way, they can control the product. They don't want people interested in things they don't have to sell, and they want people to believe their stories. It's a classic control technique.

H: Everyone has such short attention spans now, they can do that, too.

G: I know it. It's frightening, isn't it? It's the reason George Bush will probably get back in, and that's a tragedy.

H: Was the Manchester scene supportive to you and your endeavors?

G: Actually, yes, although I was living in London most of the time I was doing this. Manchester was always one of the places where people really liked us straightaway, and we always used to get good crowds. The third time Throbbing

"Art of any kind—music, writing, film, performance—should be about inspiring people to believe that they themselves can do something new."

Gristle played in Manchester, was at Tony Wilson's Hacienda Night Club, that one in the movie "24 Hour Party People"? In fact, one of the first bands to play at that club was Throbbing Gristle. I remember Joy Division, Spiral Carpets, and the people who became the Happy Mondays, they were all there in the audience at the front, and later on, there were times when I came to meet them as the bands that they became, they all told me about that show being one of the reasons that inspired them to become the bands that they were. That was the gig that inspired them. In the film "24 Hour Party People," they talk about the Sex Pistols playing at that club, and that that inspired Tony Wilson, but in fact, the Manchester bands were inspired even more by the Throbbing Gristle gig at the Hacienda Club.

And still to this day, people in Manchester tell me about that, that they were there, and that was the pivotal moment that they all felt, "Well, you really can have a band and play anything. It doesn't just have to be punk but rock'n'roll. It can be really different." And so it opened up their imaginations, which was exactly the point—to me, anyway. Art of any kind—music, writing, film, performance—should be about inspiring people to believe that they themselves can do something new, and that their imagination is valid, and that their energy can be shared with people who they'd otherwise never meet, just through being creative. And that's the only reason I still do things, is because sometimes, it still happens. People tell me after a show that they're really inspired, or that we've changed their life, or it's reminded them of things that they've nearly forgotten, because life is so repressive in this particular society, because people are so busy trying to pay their bills that they've forgotten about things like change and evolution.

H: What brought you to the United States, and what keeps you here?

G: That's a good question. I'm actually trying to think about where to go next, to tell you the truth. I think a lot of people are going to leave, if the next presidential election goes sour. I'm already looking for other places. But I came here because I could do everything I wanted and not be attacked. I was left alone. In England, it was just becoming impossible to do anything. The newspapers were just printing all these ridiculous articles about me being the most evil man in Britain, that I was corrupting the minds of the youth—and I hope I was—from their perspective, anyway. And it was just becoming impossible to do anything. They were opening my mail, they came and took away two tons of my archives from the house and destroyed it. It was clear that they were just going to keep on and on and on attacking my lifestyle, until I was incapable of doing anything. And so I thought, "Okay, I've been here forty years. That's long enough to be in any

one country. I'll go somewhere else!"

So first of all, I went to Thailand and Nepal, and in Nepal, I worked with Tibetan refugees spending most of the money I made out of record sales on helping to put together small hydroelectric schemes for monasteries in the mountains and in the little villages. You can do it for about \$5,000, because they have so many streams coming off the mountains. You basically just put a big, metal tube in the stream, with a small dynamo in the middle, and you get enough electricity for light bulbs in the village and to warm and sterilize water, and then they don't have to cut down the trees. So I was doing that while I was being accused of being evil in England. (laughs). Kinda funny. I spent a lot of time meditating with the Tibetan monks and finding my own place in the world.

H: Well, you weren't converting the little brown people. That's why England thought you were still evil.

G: Right! I wasn't being a missionary. I was listening. And no, they were converting me! There was one day when I finally found out that while I'd been in Katmandu, that my house had been raided and all this stuff was taken, so I went and saw one of the Tibetan refugees, and I said through a translator friend, "Guess what? I'm a refugee in exile, too, now." And we both burst out laughing, and had a nice cup of Tibetan tea, and it didn't seem so bad. You know, I'd spent six months with all these other refugees who had had much worse things happen to them, and it kept it in perspective. And then I was sitting in the hotel room, and the hotel was owned by Tibetans, afterwards, and as soon as they heard what happened to me, they said, "Hey, you can stay as long as you want for free. You've been nice to us for six months, and now we can take care of you."

So I was reasonably safe—and I had my children with me, too—and I was thinking about everything, and I noticed that there were some letters that I'd picked up as I was leaving England, and had just thrown into my suitcase but never looked at them. And so I

was opening these letters, just trying to process what was going on, and I opened one of them from Michael Horowitz, who turned out to be the man who was taking care of the Timothy Leary archives. And inside his envelope was a little postcard with a letter on it, and it said, "If you ever need a refuge, call this number." And I just looked at that, and thought, "How weird! How did he know I would need a refuge six months ago?" So I rode back into Katmandu, found a phone where you could phone internationally, called his number, and he answered and said, "Just come over. You can stay with us for as long as you want." So I thought, "Okay! I guess that's where I'm meant to go next." So that was how I ended up in America. I just followed the signs.

I lived in his spare bedroom for about six months with my two children. I raised money by helping with some raves in San Francisco—it was kind of the beginning of the rave movement there. It had just started about a year before, maybe less. And one of the rave kids came and up to the house one day—they found out where I was staying, and turned up at the house and said, "We want to help you get somewhere to live, so we're going to do a couple of raves, and you can have all the money." It was extraordinary! That's what I'd been hoping people would get back in England, you see, that you make a difference with your art, where sometimes you're helping someone out with money or whatever through your creativity, and then later on, that person may be able to help you out through their own creative endeavors. There really is this much more exciting version of everyday life that comes from living like this, if you just surrender to the nonlogical, the illogical version of reality—the magical version of reality, to put it in a very simple way.

So anyway, it all worked out fine. That's how I got here, and I was able to stay because of that, people who'd seen things years before when we were touring, helping out. And then I fell in love. Madly, crazy in love! With my darling other half, Lady Jaye. And I'm still here. We're still here.

H: Or at least until after the next Presidential election.

G: Yeah, right! Problem is, I mean, everywhere is messed up. There's no place to go. Even in Thailand, they've got problems, and Katmandu, they've got Maoists setting off car bombs, so you can't run away from the mental illness of this particular society, or any society. It seems like all contemporary societies are suffering from some form of paranoid schizophrenia, with a sociopathic overtone. So I think that the artists and the creative people, in a way, are living like they lived in the late '70s. There are certain hotspots—the punk/industrial movements, when those both began in '75, '76, '77, and then the rave scene in the mid-80s. We're at the point now where if people are really sincere about wishing to change human nature, and change their own nature, and evolve and become something much more fabulous than that that we're expected to be, if we want to be more than drones, if we want to be fully evolved, creative beings, then this is the time where we can really stand and be counted by our actions.

My response to a crisis is always work harder. Hence, we're touring with Psychick TV again, Lady J and I are doing art shows as Breyer P-Orridge. We just finished building an art gallery in our house so we can show other people's work, at least a little bit. Our responsibility is to just work even harder, and just do more. The best you can do is try and set an example of ways to be that aren't the crippled versions of the life that society keeps trying to foist onto us, to impose upon us. Now, there's nothing more sickening to me than deliberately exaggerated ignorance, and that's why I can't even stand to see George Bush on the television. He just represents the worse kind of ignorance as product. They're all just a bunch of crooks, latent crooks. There are ways to sidestep that. I don't think engaging it head-on is ever going to be the answer. The answer is to live differently, no matter what, no matter how hard it is, to refuse those values that are being pushed, and to be clear about your own values, and live like those. And if you can just do that, if you can just be an example of sincerity

and clarity and uncorrupted intention, then you've done something that terrifies those criminals. You've actually started to be a real being, a thinking, conscious being, instead of another statistic in their game. I still end up being fairly idealistic. It has to be part of my '60s growing up, but I think it's still applicable if you do it from the right perspective. You adapt to the times, you know?

H: You use such a wide assortment of instruments and sounds in your music, it must be difficult to replicate the music exactly when you perform live. Do you bring your equipment over with you when you tour?

G: Only guitars. The club has to help provide the back line of amps and stuff, because it would be impossible to bring anything more. So we just bring guitars, and sampling keyboards—you know, the minimum.

H: And then you have to trust the baggage handler not to destroy them.

G: Oh, don't say that! Especially with sampling keyboards. If they decide to drop them, so much could be lost. I mean, we've got these ridiculously thick flight case for the keyboards, but even so, you never know.

H: It's always fun to sit on the plane and watch the baggage handlers throw things into the luggage compartment.

G: No, it's not fun. I don't enjoy that at all. It's very scary for me.

H: The last couple of times I've flown, I've put everything in a plastic bag I could carry on with me that they could see through and tell that nothing was in there but my laundry.

G: Oh, I like to do that. I always put the stinky laundry on top, so if they decide they want to look through the suitcase, I've made it as unpleasant as possible for them. I find the smelliest sock and put it right there on top of the pile. It worked, once, stopped a search completely. The third time I went to Poland, when it was still a Communist country, I bribed a soldier to give me his uniform, which,

of course, technically could have been seen as espionage. I was a bit reckless back then, when I was younger. So anyway, I had this uniform in my bag, when I suddenly realized I had to go through the Polish border, and the East German border. So I put the uniform in a bag of laundry, and then I put my stinky socks and things all on top, and when they came and started looking through my things—they did look in the bag, but put it down really quick. It was just a plastic bag full of laundry, so they weren't expecting to find a uniform at the bottom, and I just sailed through Customs with the uniform without incident.

H: So as the founding father/mother of industrial music, what do you think is the future of music?

G: The future of music? Well, it has to be something that's not on television. I think television has basically completely destroyed the natural patterns of music for it to evolve. Now, if something seems even vaguely interesting, it's signed, packaged, pushed out into the marketplace, and then, after a brief surge of interest, without it having had time to mature or for the group to really think about a lifelong series of ideas they would like their music to incorporate and change with—and then all of the other companies get copycat versions of that one band and sound. Within six months, all that creative activity is corrupted and destroyed, and turned into just commodity. For music to have a future where it's creative, it has to return to live events, more independent radio, like college radio or even more independent than that. I think the Web will become important for music because in a while, people will be able to access bandwidths, and do their own programming, a bit like in the days when industrial was often just heard on a friend's cassette tapes.

So I think that the impact of the Internet for independent new music still hasn't really been seen, but it will.

And as for style, it's hard to imagine what's potentially been lost, style-wise, because of this mass-marketing process, but usually, music changes

significantly when technology changes. 60s psychedelic music went hand-in-hand with wah-wah pedals, electric guitars, new amplifiers, and so on; so when the technology allowed for loud, electric music, it sort of happened. And usually, there's a drug and/or dance and clothing that goes with that, too. So perhaps there'll be a new designer drug and some new technology that'll come along. I think there's going to be quite a long lull, and people are going to drift, work more slowly at what I think is going to be the real cutting edge: mixed media events, as we're doing, with PTV3, with video and sound, performance, basically an emotional experience rather than a musical experience. An emotional experience triggered by sound, in that the sound and the style will be less important than the effect. I think people need exhilaration, and they need excitement, and they need joy in their lives. So the next music should be about that discussion, and how to make those feelings happen, and the style doesn't matter.

An
Interview
With

CYRIL JORDAN

(Flamin' Groovies, Magic Christian, Artist)

By John Oliver

In Brutarian Issue #31, we talked with Roy Loney, founding member and lead singer of the original Flamin' Groovies, one of the best and longest lasting bands to spring out of the creative 60's in San Francisco. While Roy quit the band after their Teenage Head album in 1970, the Groovies continued for about 20 more years under the leadership of guitarist/songwriter Cyril Jordan.

The Jordan-led Flamin' Groovies' first recordings to appear with their new lineup (singer Chris Wilson, guitarist James Ferrell and drummer David Wright, along with Cyril and bassist George Alexander) were cut at Rockfield Studios in Wales with Dave Edmunds producing, around 1972. All-time classic single "Slow Death" was cut during those sessions, along with 6 other songs. While "Slow Death" never hit the charts, it's been perhaps the most covered Groovies song over the years. The two other original songs they recorded, the very Beatles-ish "You Tore Me Down" and the anthem-like "Shake Some Action," set the tone for the musical direction of the new version of the band. Their sound shifted from their Teenage Head/Rolling Stones-like sound to a more pop-oriented direction, one which tossed the influences of the Beatles, Byrds, and Paul Revere & The Raiders into the mix. Their 1976 LP, *Shake Some Action*, produced by Edmunds for the Sire label, remains to this day one of the classic rock-pop albums of all time.

Under yet another new lineup (Mike Wilhelm replacing James Ferrell), two more Sire albums followed - *Now* (1978) and *Jumpin' In The Night* (1979), each consisting of a more or less 50/50 mix of originals and covers of Byrds/Stones/Beatles/Raiders songs. Neither of these releases reached the artistic heights or garnered the critical accolades of *Shake Some Action*, but they have both aged quite well. This version of the band also played out quite a bit, judging from the number of live bootlegged shows that have surfaced over the years. Around 1980, they also recorded 5 songs at Phil Spector's famed Gold Star Studio, which have never been officially released.

The next version of the Flamin' Groovies (with Jack Johnson on lead vocals/guitar and Paul Zahl on drums, along with Cyril & George) resurfaced on record in the late 80's, with a quick and dirty live-in-the-studio LP titled *One Night Stand* (1987). This version of the band toured Australia and Europe extensively in the late 80's before hanging it up. One more LP came from them, an Australian release titled *Step Up* (1991) on the AIM label, featuring a passel of new, excellent Cyril Jordan-penned rock & roll tunes. (NOTE: As I later discovered, this was NOT a legitimate release.) The Groovies' swan song was *Rock Juice*, released a year later (1992), although it contained many of the songs from *Step Up*. The band at this point was essentially Cyril and George Alexander, along with a couple of hired hand

drummers they used. As Cyril wrote all the originals on this, and did all the lead vocals, this is about the closest thing to being a Cyril Jordan solo LP.....and then, he was never heard from again.....or was he?

Cyril, thoroughly fed up with getting screwed over from the business end of rock & roll music, hung up his guitar after Rock Juice, to concentrate on his art career. A very talented artist/illustrator, who painted several covers for Groovies LPs and CDs (Greatest Grooves on Sire, the Aussie release Rockfield Sessions/Sneakers, and the aforementioned One Night Stand and Rock Juice), Cyril worked as an artist for Walt Disney during the late 80's. He most recently got into oil painting, and has sold numerous works on Ebay for the past several years.

While Cyril was painting full-time when I first talked with him in 2002, he has since fully re-emerged in the world of music. Over the past several years, he's occasionally played live shows, notably at two recent Bay Pop shows (2000

with the Beau Brummels/Cuban Heels, and 2001 with ex-Charlatan/ex-Groovie Mike Wilhelm), and a couple of in-store shows at CD Land in Palo Alto - a George Harrison tribute show and a show with Gordon Waller (Peter & Gordon) in 2002. He's also occasionally hopped on stage to play with various bands (Oranger, Yo La Tengo, Star Spangles, and Roy Loney's new band the Diletones).

In addition, tapes of home recordings Cyril made with friend Doug Jones as the Psychodaisies about 5-6 years ago have also recently surfaced. The duo recorded about two dozen songs, practically all covers of old classics by the Beatles, Stones, Beach

Boys, Badfinger, and others, with just a keyboard (including all sorts of effects like synthesized strings), guitar and their voices. Rumors have surfaced about these recordings being officially released in the near future.

The biggest news, however, is the formation of his new band, Magic Christian, which played their first live show at the Great American Music Hall on April 1, 2004. They have since played 4-5 more gigs, including one in Spain at the Azkena Rock Festival in September 2004 (billed as the last ever gig of The Flamin' Groovies...but more on that later), and have released an "authorized bootleg" double CD set of 13 newly recorded songs, as well as their live debut show. (EDITOR'S NOTE: See review later

in this issue.) At least one of their songs has been featured on Steve Van Zandt's Underground Garage radio show. The studio CD will be officially released on a decent sized label (Rykodisk, I believe) shortly. But on with the interview with, to quote Mr. Van Zandt from his show, the legendary Cyril Jordan.....



A very rare 1967 handbill created by Cyril Jordon.

BRUTARIAN - Cyril - First, let's talk about what you're doing nowadays. You're painting a lot, and you have a new band. Let's talk about your art first, OK?

Cyril Jordan (CJ) - I've been selling a lot of paintings on Ebay over the past several years. I've also got a couple of paintings used for the old LP covers that I have stashed around here. At some point, I'd like to sell them. I'm sure I have other paintings around here that I just haven't found yet. You know, I'm living in the same house that I grew up in, and after 40 years, you just pile up stuff, and

it's sometimes difficult to find something you're looking for.

BRUT - It's a miracle your mother didn't throw out a lot of that stuff, like mine did with my old baseball cards and comics, once I went off to college. I'd be rich now if she'd only left those things alone.

CJ - My mom was very good at that. What's really crazy is that stuff we collected as kids, like tin wind-up toys from Japan, Robby the Robot toys, or pulp comic books - they were viewed as junk back then, nobody ever thought these things

could ever possibly be valuable someday. And we loved this stuff so much when we were growing up, so now we're looking for it and collecting it. For me, collecting is like a time machine....especially rock & roll music. You might hear a song that you remember from 30 years ago, and it just takes you back to when you first heard it.

BRUT - That's why it was such a blast for me, hearing the Psychodaisies stuff you did with Doug Jones. Some of those Byrds covers, like "The World Turns All Around Her,"....God, the last time I heard that was probably the last time I played the Turn Turn Turn album. Some of your recent paintings also take me back to the days

I used to read Famous Monsters of Filmland and the old comics. It seems like a lot of your paintings on Ebay have been repos of old magazine covers, like Famous Monsters, no?

CJ - What I'm basically doing....I have huge files of old movie posters, pulp art, comic books, Walt Disney cartoons, you name it, I've got it! I've got like an incredible library of reference work. When I was learning how to paint, I didn't have the money to go to art school. Even if you do go to art school, you have to luck into finding the right teacher....

BRUT - So you're totally self taught?

CJ - Yes, it's just like with the guitar,

I taught myself. Salvador Dali said many years ago, if you don't copy, you don't create. He went on this rap about how God created everything, so anything you paint, you're just copying something God's already done first....and that's how you learn. I learned painting by copying the masters.... and you know, most people don't realize, the Mona Lisa hanging in the Louvre, nobody's really sure if it was really done by DaVinci, because anybody in Leonardo's class, like Raphael, for instance - the only way they passed his class was by painting the Mona Lisa.

BRUT - So that might really be a fake....or, I should say, a copy?



Cyril Jordon's Flamin' Groovies art.

CJ - There are a lot of them floating around from that time period that are just as good as the original.

BRUT - When did you really get serious about art?

CJ - I started working in art about 1988 or so.... I was working for Disney, doing Mickey Mouse covers. The Gladstone comics out of Arizona - that's what really got me interested in doing this professionally. I started working as an artist, doing posters and other odds and ends, and I met a guy who was an agent for Disney and he liked my stuff, and within 6 months of trying to make a living doing this, I was working for Disney, doing Mickey Mouse, and I thought "man.... compared to the music business".....

BRUT - You were kind of on a fast track there.

CJ - Yeah, totally! Since about '88, I've been drawing every day, and it's been about 4 years now that I've been doing the oil painting. A couple of years ago, before the new band, I was working anywhere from 6 to 15 hours a day painting.

BRUT - What was first LP cover you did?

CJ - It was the One Night Stand cover - a very large piece with a lot of paste-ups. I still have the original artwork for it, as well as for the Groovies' Greatest Grooves and the painting with the Dali-esque guitars hanging over the clothesline.

BRUT - The Dali-like cover is on my Sneakers/ Rockfield Sessions CD, an Australian import.

CJ - That painting was supposed to be for a t-shirt that we were going to sell on our last Australian tour - but when we got the t-shirts, they didn't even look like the painting! Years later, I heard it was used for the cover of one of the Australian LPs/CDs.

BRUT - What was the deal with so much of your material coming out on that Aussie label (AIM)?

CJ - Well, I don't really know what happened with the Australian CDs, as I had a falling out with Peter Noble. He's kind of a Allen Klein, gangster type, and he's never paid me any royalties for any of the material he's been releasing for the last decade. I just don't want to deal with those kinds of people nowadays. I'd love to go after them, but life's too short. I've got my Dad, I've got my life ahead of me, and I just don't want to spend the time or energy that would really be needed to go after that guy.

BRUT - So you're not getting any money for the AIM releases?

CJ - Not a cent. Noble was great at digging up old Flamin' Groovies stuff and releasing it. He also did a great job in hyping us throughout Australia on our last tour there. We did all sorts of television and radio shows throughout the continent when we went there. When we left, we didn't hear from him for about a year and a half, then he set up a tour in Europe for us, which was the biggest fiasco that ever happened. We were told we were going to make 50,000 pounds for the tour....but it turned out he got the 50,000 number from adding up different currencies from Holland, Denmark, Germany.....all different denominations.....

BRUT - Apples and oranges and grapefruit, huh? Like in Italy, where 50,000 lire is worth about \$32 or so.....

CJ - Exactly....and we found out about this halfway through the tour. He was in Spain with us, and he took the proceeds from the gig in Madrid, which was about \$3,000, and said he was going to New York to try to make a record deal....and we never saw him again! This was in 1989. The band split up because the tour of Europe was so intensely awful. We did 7 encores each show, and 80 gigs in a row, with no days off. We got really tight by about the 3rd week, doing incredible shows. We were burning through Europe, and halfway through the tour, we found out that we were going to end up owing the agent in England 7,000 pounds at the end of the tour. I told the agent that we were flying back home right now, and the guy freaked out. I told him the only way we were going to continue with the tour is if I'm allowed to pick up all the money at every show in every country from now on. And by the end of the tour, I'm walking on stage with socks filled with Danish money, Norwegian money, Dutch money...I had no place to put them, so I was walking on stage and sticking them in front of my amp. After 30 years of touring and whatever...to have to be treated like that....I didn't see George (Alexander) for 2 years after we got back home, I was so depressed.

BRUT - Speaking of you and George, didn't the five original Groovies get together for rehearsals for a reunion in 2001? (ED: Roy Loney, Tim Lynch, Danny Mihm, Cyril and George) Rumor had it you were going to play Cave Stomp in New York later in the year.

CJ - Yes, John Weiss was going to book us for Cave Stomp. He was going to pay us some real

money, like \$40,000, and we were going to do it. We rehearsed and we were ready. However, the day before John was going to call us and make the deal was September 11th. The timing just blew the roof off that deal! We would have been there in October or November 2001.

BRUT - So you would have played Cave Stomp that year?

CJ - Yeah - the Flamin' Groovies were going to do a reunion, but it didn't happen, thanks to the Nation of Islam. (NOTE: A lengthy conversation followed here regarding the subject of terrorism, Osama Bin Laden, Iraq, etc....essentially, 2 middle-aged men ranting about proposed solutions; some quite creative - I will spare our readers the details...)

BRUT - Yeah, 9/11 changed a lot of things. My father was visiting relatives in Illinois that week, and he had tickets to see his first ever Chicago Cubs game in Wrigley Field on September 12, after being a Cubs fan for 81 years! He had to cut everything short and hightail it back home. As he later told me, "I guess God didn't intend for me to ever see the Cubs!" I remember Cave Stomp well that year - it was in early November. The Electric Prunes and the Creation, in their first ever US show, headlined the 2 nights. Great shows, but I would have rather seen your guys!

CJ - And we would have loved to have played there! After 9/11 hit, though, the band just kinda drifted apart. Danny (Mihm) moved to Seattle, to help his brother take care of their parents.

BRUT - I had heard that money (or lack of) was a big issue regarding the reunion.

CJ - No, that wasn't an issue in 2001. Weiss tried to get us several years prior to that, but he only offered us \$5,000 to do Cave Stomp. It wasn't worth it for us to fly to the East Coast and do a show. We were willing to do it for the 40 grand. I think one of the things that helped sweeten the pot regarding the money offer was Joel Selvin's SF Chronicle list that ranked us as the 4th best Bay Area band ever. And Joel actually told me that he had us ranked #3, but decided that the Grateful Dead belonged ahead of us, as they made about \$50 million a year or so when they were touring.

BRUT - Personally, I just assumed the Dead would automatically be #1 anyway, as they're the band you think about when you think San Francisco. I was surprised that Sly Stone & co.



Cyril Jordan's Recreations of comic book art.

wound up in the #1 slot. Do you know what Sly's up to nowadays?

CJ - I remember Sly conducting the orchestras at the Cow Palace show when I was a kid. He was also a disk jockey and record producer before he started his band. The last time I saw him was in about 1986....the two of us were with Buddy Miles in an apartment near the ocean one night. We were drinking and doing other foolish things....it's a funny story, because I somehow accidentally set Buddy Miles' hair on fire, and I put the fire out by dumping a pot of water from the stove on him - and there were also peas and carrots in the pot. To this day, he and Sly both think I went fucking nuts. I haven't heard anything about Sly Stone since then. He's been pretty much a recluse for the past 20 years or so. During the last days of his band, he no-showed several very large shows at the Cow Palace, and he was pretty much stoned most of the time.

BRUT - Going back to that list, you guys and the Dead outlasted most of the other bands that made the top 10 or so. You guys were so influential on several music trends, I thought.

CJ - I think that's why we were ranked so high. Joel said we influenced hundreds of bands. We were also on so many labels...we were on about as many labels as Ike Turner.

BRUT - You were also bootlegged quite a bit, especially the band with Chris Wilson as lead singer.

CJ - We played an incredible number of live shows, and we also did a lot of radio shows and broadcasts.....all of which were probably bootlegged. This was when the city was really alive, and there were tons of live venues.

BRUT - Which leads me into the next area..... whatever happened to the music scene in San Francisco? It's obviously very expensive to live there now, which is detrimental to musicians.

CJ - Basically what happened was that Bill Graham sewed it up. He monopolized the entire live music scene. When he died, there was a 6-7 year gap where the city was just toast. Bill Graham shows kept going on, whether they were at the Civic Auditorium or at Slim's or wherever....up at Concord or at the Shoreline, the places he had.....those shows went on, but it was as if San Francisco itself was ignored. But I'll tell you what - in the last 3-4 years, I've been club-hopping, and there's a whole new music scene here, with kids who can actually play, and I wouldn't be surprised if some of them make it nationally over the next couple of years. The Flakes, the Sermon.....some of these groups are very impressive, they're unlike anything I've seen in San Francisco in about 30 years.

BRUT - That's great! You really need something to reverse this trend. I've been traveling to the city regularly since the early 90's and it just seems like the number of venues has dropped dramatically over the past 10 years alone.

CJ - That's very true, but there are some new great clubs. There's a really good one behind the Chronicle building called the Tempest.....it reminds me of the old Cavern - it's all brick, down an alleyway. The Groovies played the original Cavern in '72, before they tore it down, and Tempest reminds me of it. It's near Mission and 5th. There's another club called the Covered Wagon on Mission and 6th.

BRUT - I saw Dave Vanian and the Phantom Chords at the Covered Wagon in July 2000. That's a nice seedy little club. I've also been to

Bottom of the Hill, but that's kind of a dump in a bad neighborhood. I've seen several shows at the Parkside, a nice club, but it's so small. Speaking of music venues, let's talk about your music career, which kind of got kick-started again recently.

CJ - Well.....in 1990, when the Groovies returned from that European tour like wounded animals, like I said, George and I lost touch with each other. We didn't want anything to do with the music business for quite awhile. From about 1990 to 1996, I can't even remember what the Hell I was doing. I was just in a daze. I barely touched my guitar. I was just ready to let go of it, then the movie "Clueless" came along, and they used "Shake Some Action" in the soundtrack. And like a ghost haunting me, the music came back.

BRUT - You did some club dates - I have a bootleg CD of a show you did with the Sneetches in June 1991 at the DNA Lounge. That was a killer show! You sounded like the Groovies on a hot night! You played some old chestnuts I never thought I'd hear again - "I'll Cry Alone", "Teenage Confidential"...

CJ - Yeah, that was a great show. I really rehearsed those guys - if I recall, we even rehearsed for about 8 hours the day before the show. We rehearsed so much their drummer ended up hating me.

BRUT - Aside from occasional club gigs, I don't really recall hearing much about you musically after that, until about 2000 or so. You played with the Beau Brummels that year at Bay Pop, then played an acoustic show with Mike Wilhelm in 2001.

CJ - Actually, I've done quite a bit of hopping on stage at various clubs over the past few years - with Cracker, the Long Ryders, the Plimsouls, 3 O'Clock, the Dictators the last time they played here, Oranger, Yo La Tengo, the Star Spangles a couple of times, the Dilltones, and so on....

BRUT - So you've kept your guitar chops intact?

CJ - Well, like I said earlier, there was a period of about 5-6 years where I never touched the guitar.. and I didn't even want to listen to rock & roll during that time, not even the Beatles! The business had just worn me out.

BRUT - Thankfully, you're back now!

CJ - Yes, I hope so. You asked about the Beau Brummels show in 2000 - they were billed as the Cuban Heels - it was Sal Valentino on vocals and John Peterson on drums from the Beau Brummels, along with Alec Palao on bass, a guy named Jeff Jacks on guitar, and me playing lead. That was like a dream gig for me. The Beau Brummels started it all in SF, as far as the folk-rock scene. We sounded great that night! I asked Sal before the show what we were planning on playing for an encore. He said "no encores." I had noticed that "Don't Talk To Strangers" wasn't on our set list, so I asked him - "why don't we do that for an encore?" He said we weren't doing "Don't Talk To Strangers". Well, the crowd went crazy after our set and demanded an encore....so I started playing "Don't Talk...", and Peterson fell right into it on drums, so Sal ended up singing it - and it sounded great!

BRUT - I believe **DIG Music** recently released on CD the last show ever of Sal's band **Stoneground**.

CJ - We used to gig with **Stoneground**, and they'd show up with like 28 people. It was like a tribal thing. They were one of the featured bands on this nationwide tour that Tom Donohue dreamed up in the late 60's - the **Medicine Ball Caravan**. It was going to be a large traveling caravan of nothing but SF bands. The **Grateful Dead** were one of them. The **Groovies** were going to do it as well, but it fell apart before we could.

BRUT - Wasn't someone going to make a movie out of it?

CJ - Yes, they were, but it never happened. **Stoneground** was pretty much manufactured by Donohue for this tour.

BRUT - Your next live show you did was at **Bay Pop** in August 2001, an acoustic gig with **Mike Wilhelm**.

CJ - The 2001 gig with **Mike Wilhelm** - the **Groovies** all idolized the **Charlatans** in the 60's. The **Groovies** and the **Charlatans** were basically SF's version of the **Lovin' Spoonful**. When the **Spoonful** broke up, that jug band style of rock & roll ended. Anyway - I met Mike in '69 at the **Carousel** one night, and gave him a ride home. He ended up showing me the open G tuning for slide guitar and a lot of other things as well. As a matter of fact, what he showed me on slide wound up all over the **Teenage Head** album. That album wouldn't have sounded like it did if I hadn't started hanging out with **Wilhelm**.

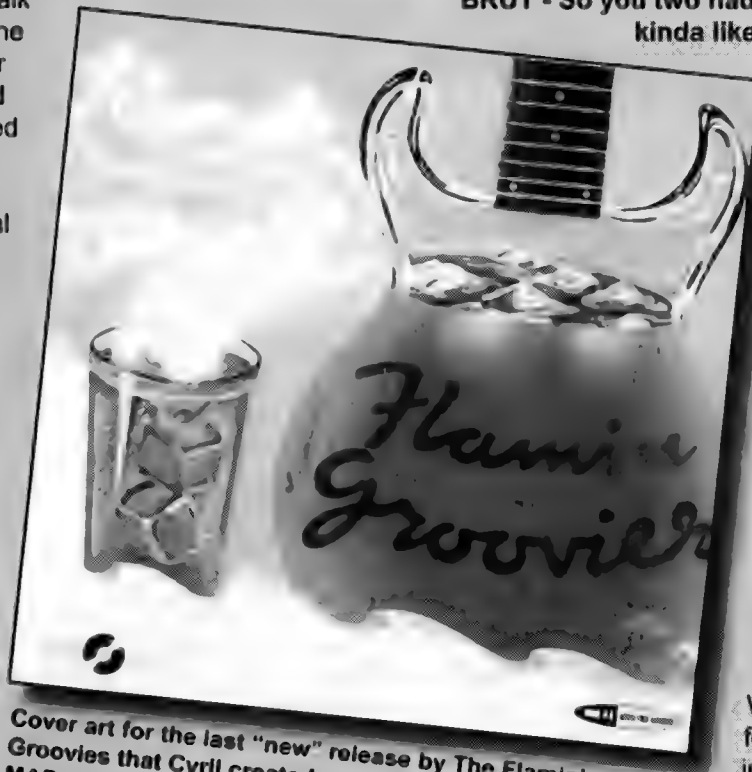
BRUT - So you two had a musical relationship kinda like **Ry Cooder** and **Keith Richards** (NOTE: the former schooled the latter on how to play slide guitar). How did Mike end up in the **Groovies**? I've always wondered about that.

CJ - The **Cooder/Richards** analogy is a good one. Now - how Mike joined the band.....after we recorded the **Shake Some Action** LP in England with (Dave) **Edmunds**, we were rehearsing for an upcoming gig, and we had to replace **Jimmy Ferrell** on very short notice. **Mike Wilhelm** agreed to come in for the live show - he came in and learned 24 songs two days before the gig! He's a genius! The gig went great, and we thought Mike was just

going to play live with us, but he ended up joining the band. He played all the slide parts on both **Now** and **Jumpin' In The Night**. He did some great solos on those records - "**Werewolves of London**", and that **Marvin Gaye** song, "**(You're My) Wonderful One**".

BRUT - That **Marvin Gaye** cover was only on the UK version....which I found about 6 months before the US version, by the way. I always like the sequence of songs a lot better on the UK version.

CJ - On the original UK version, we started out playing a song in E ("**Please Please Me**"), then went up to G, then A, and so on. The sound of the record



Cover art for the last "new" release by The Flamin' Groovies that Cyril created as a tribute to a favorite MAD magazine cover.

modulates....we did it on purpose as a goof.

BRUT - Question about the sequence of your record releases. Once Roy left and you took over the band, the first release I remember was the Bomp 45, "You Tore Me Down", with the Paul Revere & the Raiders song on the flip side, "Him or Me". Well....your next release starts with "Shake Some Action", which always sounded to me like a Raiders-type song. That LP ended with the Byrds-like "I Can't Hide". The next LP, Now, started with the Byrds' "I'll Feel A Whole Lot Better", and ends with the Beatles' "There's A Place". Then the LP Jumpin starts with "Please Please Me". Was this deliberate?

CJ - Absolutely! We were catching so much flak back then for playing those covers... and, to me, those songs are just so great.

BRUT - Yeah, and those covers have aged so well, I think.....

CJ - That's because they're so powerful. We played so much louder than the Beatles ever did. The loudest amps they ever used were about 60 watts. When we recorded in Rockfield with Dave, we were using 200 watt Orange amps.

BRUT - Dave Edmunds' productions always sounded so larger than life. The covers you guys did just came across so much stronger than the originals, sound-wise. What do you remember about working with Dave at Rockfield?

CJ - Dave permanently messed up his hearing because of the way he produced. It's like a Spinal Tap story; the first time we recorded with him. You remember in "This Is Spinal Tap" about how those amps went to "11"? In the Rockfield Studio, the mixing board controls go to "10", then "Stone Deaf", then "D.E.", which stands for Dave Edmunds! He wanted the bands playing as loud as humanly possible, and he listened to all of the playback

through these huge 18" German speakers. He's lost most of his hearing. I had the first Marshall stack in SF, and I remember a few years later, with the Who and Zeppelin coming in with 3 stacks per instrument....all I could think of was - somebody's going to go deaf from this!

BRUT - I think a lot of musicians have over the years. Let's back to the 2001 acoustic gig with Mr. Wilhelm...

CJ - Well, it started out as another Beau Brummels/ Cuban Heels gig, but everybody backed out. I

had about 3 weeks to put something together, so I called Mike. We rehearsed a couple of times. I was nervous at the show for the first song, but was OK after that. Playing acoustic gigs isn't something that I'm used to doing....but I got to play some of my favorite early Stones songs, and I enjoyed it. I hadn't seen Mike in about 18 years prior to bumping into him at a motorcycle race at Sears Point about 6 months before the show. We had a falling out back in the early 80's, and lost touch with each other. I saw him at the race and yelled his name. From the look on his face, he

looked like he may have been afraid that I was going to punch him....but I hugged him, and everything's been OK since. Mike's got health problems - he has emphysema.

BRUT - The one thing that night that really stuck out in my mind is how both of you look pretty much like you did in the 80's.

CJ - Yeah, you'd think we'd be looking all worn and haggard by this point. I've learned one thing from Keith Richards....guitarists are very resilient. The drummers and singers tend to wear out, but not the guitarists!

BRUT - A funny thing about your acoustic show at the Café DuNord....including you, there were three musicians there that night whom we've



Cyril Jordan's Flamin' Groovies art.

interviewed for the magazine. Roy (Loney) showed up, and Bob Mosley of Moby Grape was also in the audience, sitting in the back with his wife Connie.

CJ - Really?

BRUT - Yeah, he goes way back with some of the Chocolate Watch Band guys (NOTE: Cyril and Mike Wilhelm opened that night for the Chocolate Watch Band and Chris Von Sneider). Bob's another one who got so fed up with the music business at one point that he just dropped out. In his case, he quit Moby Grape around '70 or '71 to join the Marines and get away from it all.

CJ - I remember when the Grape first hit the SF scene...all the buzz was about Jerry Miller and what a great player he was (NOTE: still is!). Then we went and saw the band - my God, with Bob, Peter (Lewis), Skip (Spence).....they had so much talent there, and such a great opportunity with Columbia.

BRUT - They still get together once in awhile to play...and they're still great! But let's get back to your music, shall we? Let's talk about the show you played at CD Land in Palo Alto with the New Moondogs, the George Harrison tribute show right after he passed away. I have a copy of that show. While it sounds obviously under-rehearsed, it also sounds like you had a lot of fun doing it.

CJ - I had never met those guys in my life prior to doing that show - which is the first time I've ever done such a thing - going on stage with guys I had never played with. We had so much fun doing it that we decided to try it again...which we did with Gordon Waller (NOTE: of Peter & Gordon fame).

BRUT - I also have a copy of that show - and I was surprised to see you guys start out with some old rockabilly numbers.

CJ - Yeah, that surprised me, too....we got the set list from him about a week before the show, and it listed "That's Alright Mama" as the opener, and I thought "wow, so that's where he came from. Because Peter & Gordon's 60's stuff was so

heavily produced, with the strings and Jeffrey Love's orchestra. Gordon was fucking great that night, and I was very nervous playing with him. To me, Peter & Gordon's stuff was right up there with the Beatles.

BRUT - Gordon seemed surprised that you guys kept up with him.

CJ - The hardest one was "Lady Godiva". Once we caught onto the rhythm, it was kind of a Dixieland thing. And yes, Gordon was astounded that we actually knew all of his material. My friend Jeff Jacks (NOTE: member of latest version of Chocolate Watch Band) and I recorded some Peter & Gordon songs last year, and he sang Peter Asher's parts at the CD Land show.

BRUT - Speaking of covers of old songs, what's the story behind the Psychodaisies material? You recorded all of this stuff in your living room?

CJ - Yeah, we did an incredible amount of material about 5-6 years ago - a friend of mine Doug Jones, he's an electronics whiz who also plays keyboards and guitar, and sings really well...he brought over a nice portable recording unit, and we sat

in my living room, right in front of my TV set, and we recorded a bunch of songs that we both love. I don't know how those tapes got out.

BRUT - I believe I heard they're going to be formally released at some point.

CJ - Yeah, Doug knows the details on all of that.

BRUT - Those have to be among the best vocals you've ever done. A question - aside from the last 2 LPs, Step Up and Rock Juice, where you did most of the lead vocals, which Groovies songs did you sing lead on?

CJ - When Roy was in the band, I didn't do many lead vocals....I think I did "Laurie Did It", "Barn Balaam", then I did the 2 songs on Teenage Head ("Yesterday's Numbers", "Whiskey Women"). Let's see, with Chris in the band, I did "I Can't Hide", "I'll Cry Alone", "Married Woman", "Jumpin in the Night", and maybe 1-2 others.



Cyril Jordan's Reinventions -- The Beatles Montage.

BRUT - Well....I think this brings us up to the new band, Magic Christian. Who's in the new band?

CJ - Our singer is Paul Kopf. He was one of the founders of the Bay Pop festival. He hasn't really ever been a professional singer before. I've known him for a couple of years, and I just found out recently he's really a good singer. So we've been bugging each other about putting a group together sometime. This particular band wasn't really my idea - it just came about from the people I was hanging out with. Paul can sing, and my friend Alec Palao is a great bassist. He's a long-time member of The Sneetches, and he's a really well-known rock historian (**ED. NOTE:** Alec has assembled and written liner notes for numerous killer releases for a variety of labels like Ace and Big Beat, among others. I've also seen him recently playing bass with the reunited Chocolate Watch Band.) The 3 of us decided to find a drummer that we liked, and we first settled on this guy Russell Quan.

BRUT - Russell's been in, it seems like, dozens of bands.....the Bobbyteens, Dukes of Hamburg, and he was in the Mummies and Phantom Surfers.

CJ - He's also in the Flakes. He was going to be our Ringo, but things didn't work out. We wound up with Prairie Prince (Tubes, Jefferson Starship, etc.), who is a real powerhouse....it's kinda like playing in the Who with Keith Moon! We're going to have to work our shows around Prairie's schedule, because he's still quite in demand as a drummer. The funny thing is - we formed the band before we ever played together. I wasn't even sure if I could still write rock & roll songs, but once I got started, the songs started coming. I first came up with a couple of licks, and we took them into the studio long before we were ready to play live. For a live gig, I'll rehearse whatever band I'm playing in like crazy. For a recording situation, we don't rehearse, we just go into the studio, because I like that kind of anxiety, that freshness where people don't really know their parts. It keeps them alert. That's the way the Groovies cut all of our albums after Teenage Head.

BRUT - So you're the only guitarist this time, and you're doing the writing by yourself?

CJ - Yes. Actually, we had a second guitarist in Magic Christian in the beginning (Tom Vickers), but he didn't work out. I've had to change both my guitar style, to a Pete Townshend/Mick Green kind of lead and rhythm, and my writing, to deal with my new guitar style.

BRUT - You were a member in two of the best rock & roll writing teams ever - Roy Loney and you, then Chris Wilson and you. What was the difference between the way those two teams wrote songs? Did the singer usually write the lyrics and the guitarist the music?

CJ - First, thanks for the compliment! In the first lineup of the Flamin Groovies, I was the baby of the group, and Roy basically taught me everything I know about songwriting.

BRUT - When we interviewed Roy, he said he thought you guys were a great combination because of the mix of your main influences - he went back to Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran and the rockabilly guys, while your first great musical influence was the Beatles.

CJ - While it's true that we had great chemistry as a song writing team, my first musical love was actually surf music in the early 60's. I knew how to play all that stuff - "Wipe Out", "Walk Don't Run", "Mr. Moto", all those songs. Around '63 or so, I got disillusioned with rock & roll music, but then the Beatles definitely revitalized my interest in playing guitar. Regarding Roy and me - for our first LP, he wrote most of the songs, while I'd come up with interesting arrangements or riffs to use. After Supersnazz, I wrote most of the music and Roy the lyrics. By the time we did Teenage Head, we were really clicking as a team. I remember I came up with the intro riff to "Teenage Head", and he had 2-3 verses by the next day. When Roy left and Chris Wilson joined the band, I kind of assumed the role Roy had played in our early days, as I'd write most of the songs, while Chris would add interesting little twists to them, or a verse or two. I gave Chris credit as a writing partner on some things where I did practically all the work. For example, he wrote the last verse of "Shake Some Action", so I gave him equal credit....and I cut my own throat because of that partnership. I'm out a lot of money because of it, and I learned my lesson the hard way.

BRUT - What's Chris Wilson doing nowadays?

CJ - I don't really know - he's been shuffling around Europe for the past 20 years or so. He was in that band the Barracudas.

BRUT - Yes, and he later joined the Fortunate Sons, with Robin Wills of the Barracudas. The last I heard about him was those 3-4 CDs he put out in the early 90's - a solo CD, one with the Sneetches, Back From the Barbary Coast with

James Ferrell, Mike Wilhelm and Danny Mihm, and that one one on the Munster label, Straight Outta Madrid, also with Ferrell and Danny.

CJ - Yeah, he came back here about 10 years ago and did a live show or two. Chris also authorized the release of some Flamin' Groovies live stuff from Europe. Personally, I haven't seen him since Halloween 1982.

BRUT - In all of your bands, it always seems you had some really cool interplay with other guitarists. I got the impression that the other player (Tim Lynch, James Ferrell) usually played the longer solos and more convoluted leads, while you always came up with the killer intros, fills and signature riffs. Is that accurate?

CJ - Yeah, somewhat....actually, the Groovies used 3 guitarists in the beginning, with Roy playing as well. We pre-dated Moby Grape with the 3 guitar sound. I always wanted at least 3 guitar parts on all of my records, so I wound up doing a lot of overdubs. You have to watch that stuff, adding all those parts though, as you still have to be able to play the song live! (laughs)

BRUT - One thing I always noticed - aside from maybe George Harrison, Keith Richards and Roger McGuinn, you probably wrote more instantly noticeable, recognizable intros to songs.....

CJ - Thanks! My philosophy has always been - if the record doesn't grab you in the first 10 seconds or so, forget it!

BRUT - Yeah, going back to Flamingo...."Second Cousin", "Roadhouse", "Coming After Me".... you know after the first 3-4 bars what the song is.

CJ - The funny thing about that album - Roy and I wrote the whole thing while driving back to San Francisco from LA in Roy's '57 Chevy. I had my (Gibson) Hummingbird in the front seat while Roy was driving. We got lost somewhere in LA, and there was some sort of a riot going on at the time, and we suddenly see these cops in their riot gear, like storm troopers. That inspired "Coming After Me", that was the very first song we wrote, and we did it in about 10 minutes. The very last song I ever wrote with Roy was "Slow Death".

BRUT - And Chris Wilson sang the version released on the 45, right?

CJ - Yes, that was inspired by a trip to Detroit. We went to Detroit right after Teenage Head. We had been there several years before, and we had such a great time meeting all these cool people that we couldn't wait to return - we had talked about it for about a year and a half. When we finally did return, most of the people we knew were either dead from drug overdoses or in jail. In the motel after our Detroit gig, we were so depressed that we wanted to split. I had the main lick to "Slow Death", and Roy kept talking that night about how being there was like dying a slow death.

BRUT - That song has the coolest slide part. I assume you played that on your plexiglass Dan Armstrong? By the way, I bought a Dan Armstrong because of the one you had on the cover of Teenage Head.

CJ - Funny, I bought mine because Keith Richards had one. Most of them are very poorly made guitars, but they look great! I still have mine, and it's a magical guitar....definitely one of the best ones they made. That was Jimmy Ferrell, by the way, on slide on "Slow Death". You're right, it is a great slide part!

BRUT - Which old Groovies numbers do you plan on covering with Magic Christian?

CJ - I'd rather not do any of the old stuff at all. Now yeah, I know, the moment I hit the stage, someone's gonna yell "Shake Some Action", just as the 2nd version of the band always got requests to do "Teenage Head"....to the point where we added it to the set, but it was the only old song from the Roy era that we did. I'd like Magic Christian to be completely new, broken away completely from the Flamin' Groovies. Actually, I'd like to get back to more of an old Stones sound - I mean, one of the main reasons we started doing Beatles covers with Chris Wilson is because we could do the 3 part harmonies with him, and do those old songs justice. Also, one of the main reasons we tried going that direction in the first place was because "Slow Death" bombed. The BBC banned it because of the word "morphine". Had that been a hit, I think we would have stayed the course and had a much tougher sound.

BRUT - I remember telling Roy when I talked with him that Out After Dark (Phantom Movers debut LP) always seemed much more like a logical follow-up to Teenage Head than Shake Some Action. But I think a lot of that is due to Roy's voice. He is such a truly distinctive vocalist.... you know it's him when he starts singing. Chris

Wilson always seemed to me to be somewhat of a chameleon as far as a singer.

CJ - That's because Chris was a great mimic. He could do Little Richard, he could do practically any other singer.

BRUT - New subject - You also produced several records during the 70's. Who were the Hot Knives? I have a single of theirs with your name on it as producer. I also have a 45 by the Poppees that you produced.

CJ - The Hot Knives were Danny Mihm's and James Ferrell's band. The Poppees were managed by Greg Shaw. I produced their singles just before we did Shake Some Action. You know, I was also supposed to produce the Searchers' comeback album on Sire - Seymour Stein had promised me, but it somehow fell through.

BRUT - That was a great album - both of their LPs on Sire were excellent. I read recently on the internet somewhere that the Sex Pistols covered "Slow Death" live? While that's possible, you would think that somebody somewhere would have taped it....it seems like every show they ever played was bootlegged.

CJ - Funny you should mention them. When we played Dingwalls right after the first '76 Roundhouse show, Malcolm McLaren, who I've known since about '72, showed up backstage to introduce the Sex Pistols. Nobody had heard of them at that point. To make a long story short, they stole the briefcase with our passports and a fuzztone in it. I heard years later that they wanted to steal my plexiglass Dan Armstrong guitar. At 5 in the morning, we're sitting in the hotel lobby with the Ramones, wondering aloud how we're going to get our passports back, when this kid who had been with the Pistols shows up and returns the briefcase, saying "sorry, we picked this up by mistake". We got our passports back, but the fuzztone was gone. Yeah, I never heard about them

doing "Slow Death". I remember the first side of their debut LP was done entirely in the key of G.

BRUT - Rumor had it at the time that Chris Spedding played guitar on that LP...now whether that was true....

CJ - He was doing so much session work over there at the time, who really knows?



PHOTO BY ERIC PREDOEHL

BRUT - The last time I saw Chris was many years ago, playing with rockabilly singer Robert Gordon...and he looked terrible, almost smacked out.

CJ - That's a real shame. The last time I saw Johnny Thunders was in Australia, shortly before he died. He was playing the best guitar of his life, and he was really excited about going to Thailand...probably both about playing there and coping (drugs).

BRUT - He wound up in the wrong neighborhood in New Orleans and went home in a body bag.

CJ - Well, in the music business, it's really easy to give in to various temptations. One of the things I've always found that really helped us (Groovies) was this house that I'm currently living in. I inherited it from my mom. The band always had this place to hang out in, and it kinda gave us some stability, I think. It's easy to wind up out on the street and homeless in this business.

BRUT - Most of the former Groovies still live in the Bay area, it seems. I've seen James Ferrell playing with Roy's new band (Dilettones), and Dave Wright's managing a restaurant in San Francisco. Roy said he's been living in the same apartment for years.

CJ - San Francisco's a great place to live, if you can afford it.

BRUT - New topic - What was the deal with the Gold Star sessions, the 5-6 songs you did in

Phil Spector's studio that have been bootlegged numerous times? Was Phil going to produce the Groovies?

CJ - Seymour Stein promised me Phil would produce us. For the Gold Star stuff we did, we used one of Phil's engineers, a guy named Morris....but Phil wasn't there himself. Seymour never paid the studio, so there's never been an official release of that material. All of the bootlegged versions came from a recording we made from the playbacks on a cheap cassette recorder. We snuck it in the studio. I hung out with Spector about 6 months after we recorded in Gold Star, and he was still interested in producing us, but it turned out to be a matter of money.

BRUT - Wasn't there an official 45 release of "River Deep Mountain High"/"So Much In Love"?

CJ - Yeah, but even that came from the cheap cassette recording.

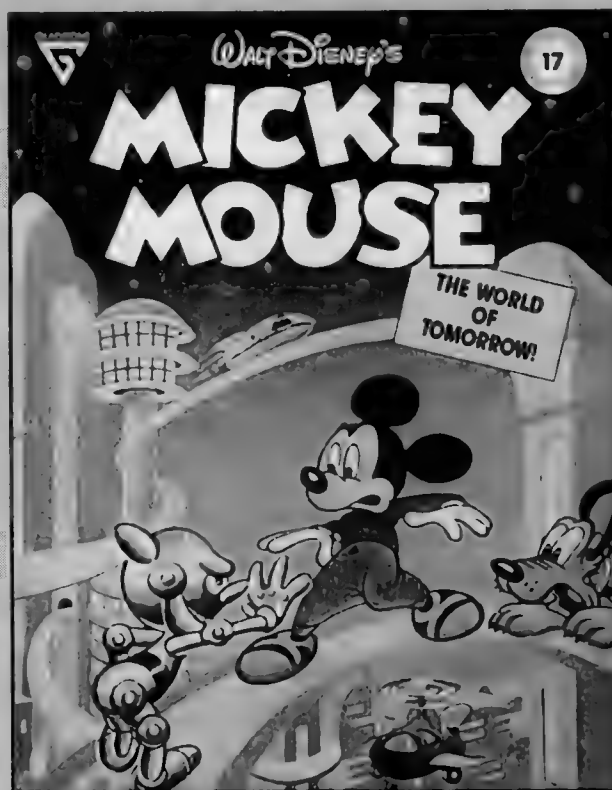
BRUT - Had Spector produced you, hopefully, it wouldn't have turned out like the Ramones' End Of The Century.....

CJ - You mention the Ramones.... Linda Stein, Seymour's wife, was managing them at the start of their career. We got along really well with Linda, and she asked if they could open for us in the UK in 1976. We did those Roundhouse and other UK shows with them, the ones that kind of started the punk movement in the UK (NOTE: where future members of the Sex Pistols, Clash and other bands saw the Ramones and got inspired to do it themselves.) To me, perhaps the biggest disappointment about the Ramones was that album they did with Spector. I heard Phil's mixes of the LP - he played them for me one night when we were hanging around Gold Star studios.....and they were incredible - It sounded like the Yardbirds in outer space!

BRUT - So the public never really heard the album as it was supposed to sound? What happened?

CJ - It was a matter of money. Seymour Stein agreed to pay Spector \$250 K to produce the Ramones, and he never paid him the entire amount. Phil's probably still sitting on those tapes to this day. (NOTE: With all of his recent legal troubles (murder rap), perhaps he'll sell or release the tapes at some point?)

BRUT - Well.....I'm pretty much running out of questions. I guess I'd like your comments on the fact that the Groovies have always been revered by the critics and their rabid fans, yet they never quite got the big commercial break, the type that could've made you rich and even more famous.



CJ - Well, it's kinda weird, how we've just missed out on several possible breaks. For example, in Rolling Stone, Ben Fong-Torres was supposed to do an interview with us in the early 70's, but it never happened. Michael Goldberg, who was managing us about the time of "Rock Juice".... he was also working for Rolling Stone, and they told him they'd fire him if he continued to manage us. That damn magazine has always ignored us, even if the critics loved us.

BRUT - I thought they were great in the late 60's when they started out, but they've sunk to the lowest common denominator imaginable

over the past 3 decades.

CJ - That's true. They've always come off with this "we're the underground press" concept, and they ended up a lot worse than the old magazines they were trying to put out of business 30 years ago. Another classic example of a missed opportunity by the Groovies, like I mentioned earlier, is the planned reunion at Cave Stomp...but 9/11 got in the way.

BRUT - One last question - If I understood you correctly the other night, you're receiving no royalties from the Groovies' recordings except for Skydog releases and Greatest Grooves on Sire?

CJ - That is correct ... and the only reason Skydog is paying me is because the head of that label read an interview with me from several years ago, where I was bitching about getting screwed over financially. Then, he started paying me.

BRUT - What's happening with the recent Norton and Buddah/BMG releases?

CJ - If anyone's getting anything from those, it's Roy. I'm certainly not seeing anything.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Since this interview, a new Norton release, *Slow Death*, featuring just Chris Wilson-era Groovies material has been released. Hopefully Cyril's reaping some money from this latest one.) I keep hearing fans ask why we don't get back together again. I love Roy to death, and I always will, but we've got a money problem regarding the old records.

BRUT - Well, we fans are a very selfish lot, and we forget a lot of times that our musical idols are just human beings too, who have to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. One last question about a subject that might have had financial ramifications (but thankfully didn't) - did you swipe the slide guitar intro to "High Flyin' Baby" (Teenage Head LP) from Captain Beefheart's "Sho Nuff N Yes I Do" (Safe As Milk LP)?

CJ - You know, John, I read that question in your interview with Roy (Issue # 31) and thought - he knows what he's talking about, he nailed that! Yeah, that intro was, let us say, inspired by the Beefheart song. That intro was the result of Mike Wilhelm showing me some very cool slide stuff.

BRUT - That was Ry Cooder's lick on Safe As Milk....and he sued the Rolling Stones for copping the "Honky Tonk Women" licks from him.

CJ - Well, if he sued us, he might have gotten about \$5, tops!

BRUT - I'm all out of questions. We're delighted to have the chance to talk to you at length.

CJ - Hey, my pleasure! You've got a great little magazine there.

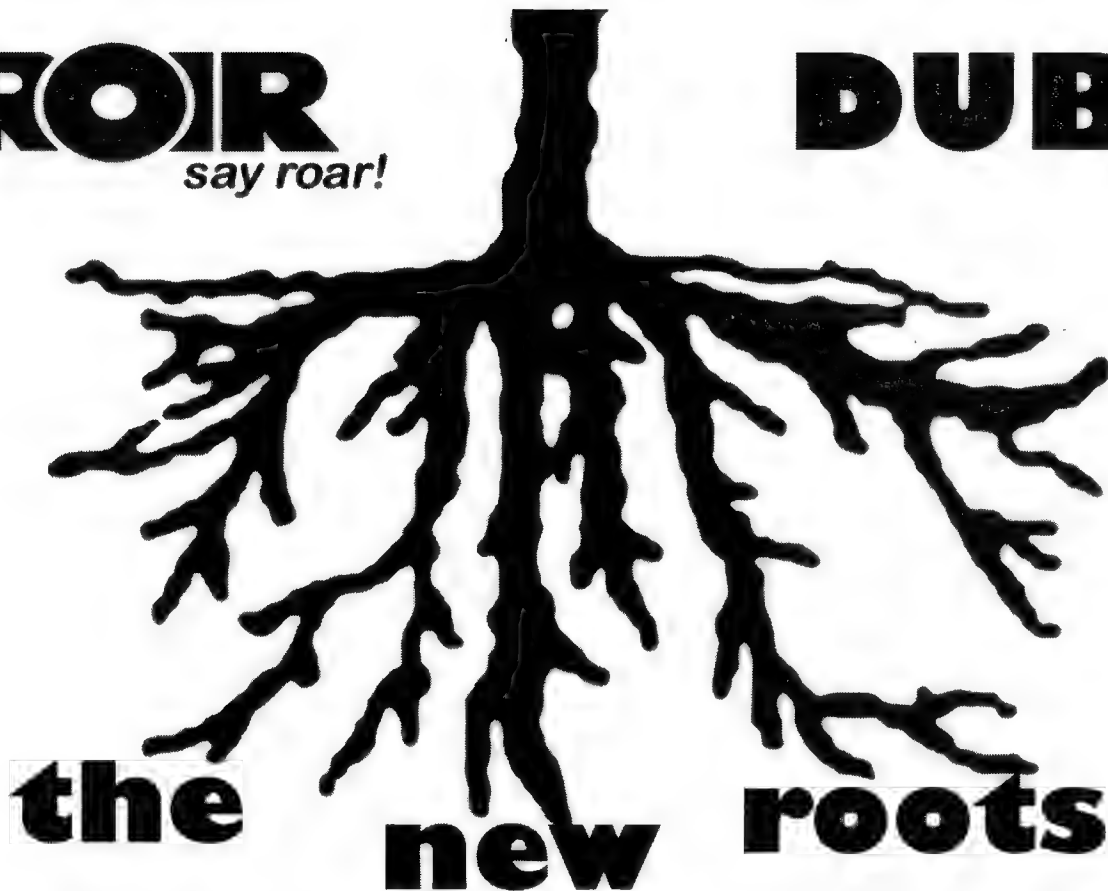
(EPILOGUE: On April 1, 2004, Magic Christian played their debut show at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, opening for The Romantics. They played no Flamin' Groovies songs. Like the

best Groovies songs. Cyril's new tunes struck me as instantly familiar, although I'd never heard them before. The new songs are killer, ranging from hard rockers (the Stones-ish "Too Close To Zero," which has been played on Steve Van Zandt's Underground Garage syndicated radio show, "Right Back Where I Started," "She's So Good,") to mid-tempo instant pop classics ("Things She Said," "Ride The Light," "Til I Looked In Her Eyes"), to Beatle-ish ballads ("Too Late To Cry," which was considered for use in the new Ethan Hawke/Julie Delpy film, "Before Sunset"). The band also did 2 great covers - the set opener, the Easybeats' "Made My Bed (Gonna Lie In It)," and the Lovin' Spoonful's "My Gal," dedicated to the late Zal Yanovsky. I talked with Cyril after the debut show, and he was pleased. Magic Christian also played a couple of gigs in June 2004, adding a couple of Beatles covers to their live set ("Things We Said Today," "Anytime At All"), along with more new Cyril J. originals. They then played the Azkena Rock Festival in Spain in September, billed as the Flamin' Groovies' last ever gig, playing a set list of Stones/Beatles/Raiders covers mixed in with Groovies classics and the odd Magic Christian tune or two. At a Zombies/Love show at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco several weeks later, I ran into all 4 band members, and they seemed pleased with the Spain show. At this show, Cyril gave me a copy of their new double CD "Authorized bootleg", available via Repeat Records. This new effort, reviewed later in this very issue, is ample proof that he's still got it, as far as songwriting, playing guitar, singing, and putting together great bands. Kudos to Cyril, Paul, Alec and Pranie! It will be released shortly on a major label (Rykodisk, I believe). Buy it, and see this fine band if they play anywhere near you.)



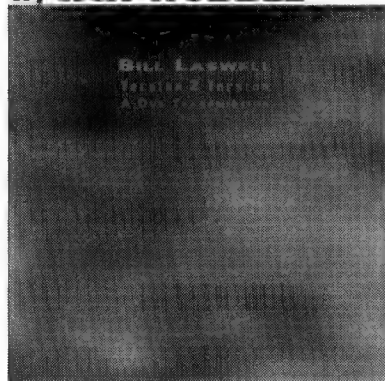
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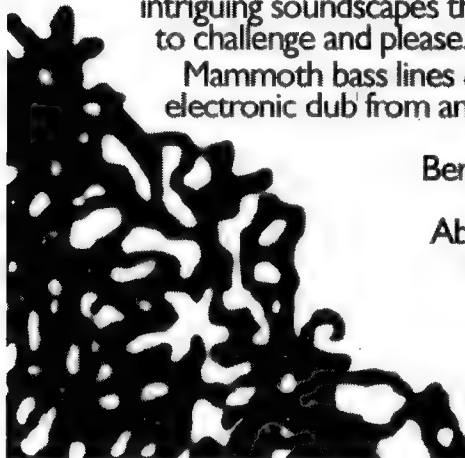
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NOTHING BUT MEAT

By
Jim C. Hines

Ebony's first taste of human flesh came in the form of a dripping Sloppy Joe on a paper plate. A yellow single-serving bag of Baked Lays leaned against the wheat bun. She had brought her own drink, a twenty-four ounce bottle of water from the Student Union. She scooped a bit of the cloned meat onto a plastic spoon and touched it to her tongue.

It was overspiced: too much garlic and salt. Curt wasn't as good a chef as he had claimed.

"Take your time," said Curt. He scooped more meat from the crock pot for the last of the eight people who sat around the crowded apartment. "Savor the experience." He smiled at Ebony and explained, "The consumption of another human being is sacred. Whoever

this was, they lived, dreamed, hoped, and loved, just like you."

The room was silent as Ebony and the others chewed and swallowed. Eventually Martin, a squat boy with a slight Texan drawl, picked up the discarded blue and yellow can and read the label pasted onto the back. "Check it out. 'John Doe' was some kind of surfer. Says here he won second place at a

big competition in Hawaii, back in 'seventy-five."

Ebony struggled to reconcile the greasy meat on the plate with an imagined surfer, his tan, strong body perfectly balanced as he rode the ocean.

"It's okay if it feels strange," Curt said. "You're shattering taboos our culture has clung to since the beginning of time."

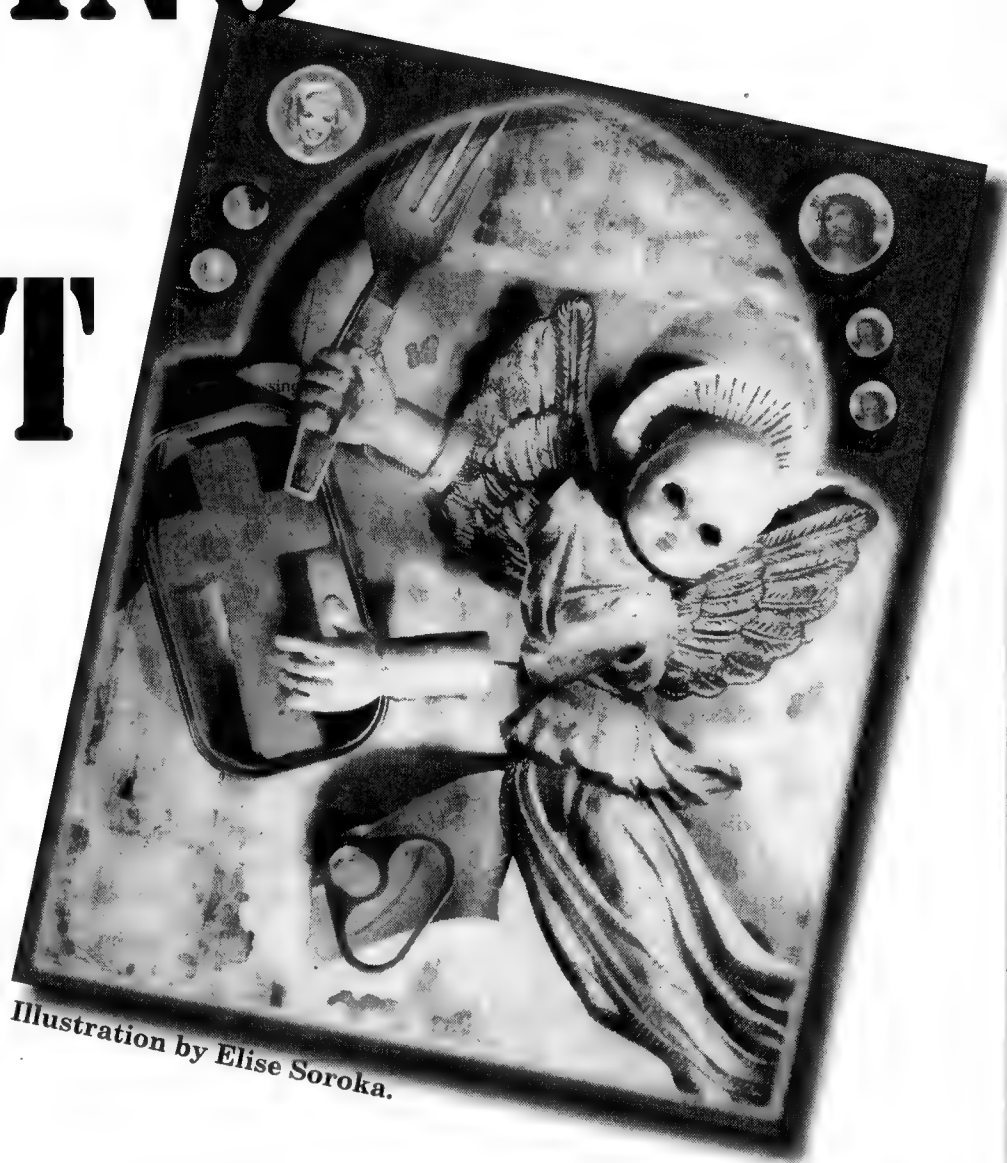


Illustration by Elise Soroka.

Everyone was watching her. She ducked her head and tried another bite.

Ebony had been vegetarian ever since she came to college, so the meat tasted coarse and unfamiliar. At least it wasn't *real* flesh. Curt said that only a few human cells were ever harvested, usually from DOA's in various hospitals. A supplier could take those samples and use the hospital's own equipment to clone enough meat for consumption.

Curt smiled. He had a nice smile, open and honest. "Don't overdo it."

"Yeah, be careful," said Martin, still reading. Cannibals used resealed SPAM cans to ship their meat. "A single serving of John Doe contains seven hundred milligrams of sodium. Surprisingly low in fat, though."

"What made you take Curt up on his offer?" asked a girl in black leather and goth makeup. Ebony recognized her from the basketball team. "I mean, most folks think we're whacked in the head. Is that why you're here? So you can tell your friends you did something wild?"

"No, it's not that. I..." She bit her lip.

"You can tell them," Curt said softly. "We've eaten human flesh together. There's nothing you can't share."

She could tell he meant it. Her shoulders and neck began to relax for the first time since... since she could remember, really.

"I needed something to believe in," she said. Nobody laughed. Bobby always laughed when she talked about angels or astrology or her Tarot deck, all the things she had tried and discarded over the past few years. He treated her like a little kid going on about Santa or

the Tooth Fairy.

Curt's eyebrows rose. "Go on."

"You told me this was *real*." She glanced away. "I need more honesty in my life."

Martin was picking his teeth with a fork. "She sounds good to me."

Curt was smiling too. He used wire cutters to trim through the side of the empty can. "Sounds like you came because you were alone. Because you need a place where you can be *you*." He finished cutting out a metal oval and folded the edges down with a pair of pliers.

She shook her head. "It's not that. I mean, I've got Bobby, and..." She glanced at the clock. Half past six already. She jumped up and grabbed her purse. "I have to go."

"What about dessert?" Martin asked. "We've got strawberry sundae cups in the freezer."

She shook her head. Curt intercepted her before she reached the door. He was threading a leather thong through two holes in the metal circle.

"For you," he said, handing her the finished necklace. The front of the pendant showed the blue and yellow SPAM logo. She saw tiny stamped letters on the back. It looked like an Internet address.

Curt fished beneath his T-shirt and showed her his own necklace. "Congratulations. You're one of us now."

#

Bobby was sleeping when she got back to his dorm room. It was practically her room, too. She never stayed in her own dorm anymore, and Bobby had a single, so it all worked out. Ebony barely remembered her own roommate's name.

Even weeks after Bobby's last round of chemotherapy, he was still weak and exhausted. He usually

wound up napping after classes... on those days he even made it to class.

Ebony tiptoed into the room and sat down on the floor next to the bed. The covers were kicked down by his feet, and she could see the tiny scar on his back. It was little more than a pale dot, a tiny reminder of the surgery six months ago, when doctors had removed a nodular melanoma. They hadn't been in time to keep it from metastasizing. After his relapse in February, the doctors had given Bobby a fifty-fifty chance.

She stood to leave, but he stirred and opened his eyes. "E? Is that you?"

"I didn't mean to wake you."

"What time is it?" He rubbed his face, then glanced at the clock at the foot of the bed. "Where have you been?"

"Studying." Had she answered too quickly? He didn't look suspicious. "With a girl I met in history. Those weekly quizzes are killing me."

Bobby rolled out of bed and stretched. Naked save for a pair of black boxers, his body was pale and skinny - a hollow, carnival-mirror reflection of the muscular soccer player who had asked Ebony out back at the start of the school year.

The room reflected his decline. Piles of dirty clothes covered the floor like multicolored burial mounds. There they would stay until Ebony found time to do laundry. Her nose wrinkled; she needed to find time soon.

A dead bonsai tree sat in the windowsill. Brown needles covered the dry, gray dirt. The blinds were closed. When was the last time he had bothered to open them? Schoolbooks were spread across his desk, nearly burying his computer.

The mouse looked like it was struggling to stay afloat in a sea of badly Xeroxed articles, mostly Ebony's.

Bobby grabbed a beer from the mini-fridge wedged between the dresser and the desk. "What's her name? This girl you met."

"Carrie." She stood up to open the blinds. Sunlight turned floating dust into glittering snowflakes.

Bobby covered his eyes. "Damn. Give a guy a little warning next time."

"I'm sorry." In a quieter voice, she asked, "How are you feeling?"

"Like a busted-up truck. I keep waiting for the engine to drop out of this rusted frame."

She walked behind him and snaked her arms around his waist. Her hand jostled his elbow, and beer splashed down his stomach. She froze.

"Dammit, E!" He pulled away. "What's the matter with you?"

"I'll... I'll clean that up." She hurried to the closet and grabbed a towel, then knelt to wipe up the spilled beer.

When she finished, Bobby gave her a kiss. "I didn't mean to snap. You know how I get sometimes."

Ebony knew. He was hurting and angry and scared, and he wouldn't admit to any of it. For an instant, she thought about bringing Bobby along the next time she went to Curt's.

That was a stupid idea. Bobby got mad if she even talked to boys during class. He'd be furious if he knew she had been spending time in a strange guy's apartment. And if he found out she was a Cannibal....

She touched her bare neck. She had slipped the necklace into her purse on the way home.

"I'm a lucky man, E," he said. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

She nodded, and he kissed her again, harder this time.

Back in the beginning, she had fantasized about kissing Bobby. Now when they kissed, she found herself wondering if he would be able to perform this time, and if not, what she would have to do to soothe him afterwards.

She also wondered if it was her experience with the Cannibals - with feeling *accepted* - that now made her feel so alone.

#

Curt had been a Teaching Assistant in Introduction to Philosophy. In the beginning, Ebony barely noticed him.

Then he assigned an essay on ethics and cultural relativity. "Argue or defend the following assertion: certain behaviors are unethical in any culture." The examples were arranged marriages, sexual initiation rites, public executions, and cannibalism.

Ebony wrote a first draft in the waiting room of Oaklawn Regional Hospital. While Bobby was being injected with radioactive dyes to track the spread of the cancer, Ebony wrote about the consumption of flesh.

Meat is meat. Why does it matter if it's human or animal? We all die sooner or later; we all abandon our frames of flesh, and we are all eaten, if not by one another, then by the worms.

When she got her paper back two weeks later, Curt had written, "*How morbid. See me after class.*"

She met him in his office, a cramped, windowless space squeezed into the hallway behind the elevators. The walls were yellow-painted cinderblock, and the desk and filing cabinet were a dingy green. Pro-environment posters and bumper stickers decorated the wall behind his desk,

and a dreamcatcher hung from the ceiling tiles.

Ebony felt like a child being sent to the principal's office. Curt was only a few years older than her, but he was a T.A. and a graduate student. She cleared her throat. "You wanted to talk to me?"

He gestured for her to sit down. "I hope I'm not prying, but when I read your paper, I kept thinking how *lonely* you sounded."

"I'm not lonely."

"Really?" He cleared off a spot amidst the papers and folders on his desk. Leaning back, he dropped his heels on the bare spot. "You never talk to the other kids before class, you always rush off with your head bowed... you're staring at the floor even now."

She jerked her head up. "I'm not. Lonely, I mean. I've got a boyfriend."

"I can see it in your eyes." He dropped his feet and leaned forward, his face halfway across the desk. "There's a yearning. You feel it, even if you can't understand it. You talked about it in your paper. Everyone is alone, nothing but meat. You ache to break through that isolation."

He touched her hand. "What if I could show you how to stop being alone?"

She jerked away, rubbing the back of her hand where his fingers had rested. "I told you, I have a boyfriend."

Curt smiled. His eyes never left hers. "You're a very beautiful girl, but I'm talking about something much deeper, much more *real* than sex."

Her face was hot. It had been a long time since anybody looked at her with that kind of intensity. She had to fight the urge to cover herself. He was right - it wasn't sexual. It was a different sort of

nakedness, like he could see right past the trappings to her very core.

"What do you mean?" she whispered.

"We build taboos, rules, customs that keep us apart. To keep us alone. There's a group of a few hundred people scattered across the country who've learned to break out of that isolation."

"How?" The passion in his voice was contagious. He believed what he was saying, and she found herself believing too.

"By breaking one of the oldest taboos there is."

#

Bobby took close to an hour to finish. Ebony helped, calming and touching and making encouraging noises until he finally called out. She would be sore in the morning, but it was worth it to see the triumph and pleasure on his face before he rolled off of her.

He touched her cheek, and she forced herself to smile. Then she waited, unmoving, until he began to snore. She ran a fingernail down his back. "Bobby?"

He didn't stir. She slipped out of bed and padded over to the desk. It only took a moment to power up the computer.

She pulled out the necklace and typed in the web address she had seen earlier, a convoluted code of random letters and numbers. It took her three tries to get it right.

The screen cleared and loaded a simple chatroom. She typed in her first name and clicked "Enter." Should she have made up a pseudonym? Before she could figure out how to erase her identity, a new message popped up.

Cannibal Clown: Ebony? Is that you? It's Martin.

She grinned, and it was like all the stress had been rinsed from her

body.

Ebony: Hi Martin!

Cannibal Clown: Hey everyone, this is Ebony. She took her first bite earlier this afternoon!

Suddenly it was all she could do to keep up with the flurry of greetings and good wishes. They wanted to know all about her. She found herself chatting with people from all across the world. She told them about everything, from the emerald earrings she wore to improve her memory and avoid depression to the paper she had written for Curt to the day she had lost her mom to breast cancer.

Over an hour later, Martin chimed back in again.

Cannibal Clown: I think we've got ourselves a keeper. This afternoon, I wasn't sure if you were going to choke ;-)

Ebony: Groan.

Cannibal Clown: So, you want to peek a bit deeper?

Ebony: Sure.

Cannibal Clown: Check out this page.

Ebony clicked on the address he sent and the chatroom disappeared, replaced by an e-shop with flashing ads and photos arranged in two columns. Most of the photos were identical flashing blue and yellow cans of SPAM. Slowly, her brain digested what she was seeing.

Human flesh, for sale by credit card, personal check, and PayPal. The anonymous John and Jane Doe's ran about fifty bucks, but as she scrolled down, actual photos began to appear.

George Burns, Richard Nixon, George Harrison, Jack Lemmon... the prices started around a thousand dollars for an eight ounce can of celebrity meat.

The most expensive sample lacked a photo. She clicked on the simple black cross.

EXPERIENCE TRUE COMMUNION FOR THE FIRST TIME!
Below the flashing banner was a smaller block of blue text.

Our lab was recently involved in carbon-dating experiments with the Shroud of Turin, the shroud said to cover Our Savior Jesus Christ after the Crucifixion. I managed to steal a DNA sample, which I repaired and used to clone the ACTUAL FLESH OF CHRIST! This could be your chance to taste DIVINITY!

My wife and I had been trying to have a child for six years. After sharing the first batch of Christ's flesh, she finally conceived twins. A woman in China said Christ helped her find true love. A man in Alaska said a single bite of Jesus cured his cataracts and healed his back pains. Others have found success at work, inner peace, and miracles of all kinds.

A can of Jesus cost eight thousand dollars. Ebony's palm was slick on the mouse. She looked at Bobby, his body twisted across the mattress. Bobby never let anyone else see how hard it was to set the pain aside, to just live his life, not knowing how much life he had left. Nobody else heard him crying on those nights he thought Ebony was asleep.

If the body of Christ could cure cataracts...

She didn't have eight grand. Her MasterCard had a two-thousand dollar limit, half of which she was still paying off for books, bills, and supplies.

She bit her lip. Bobby's family was well-off. He bragged about it when he got drunk.

It took only a moment to tiptoe across the floor, slip his wallet out of his jeans pocket, and make the purchase. She paid extra for overnight delivery.

The man selling Jesus made

no guarantees, but neither did the doctors. Eight thousand was nothing next to the hospital bills for even a single experimental treatment. And if there was even a splinter of hope that Bobby would get better and things would go back to how they used to be, she had to take the gamble.

She typed in Curt's place for the delivery address. She couldn't risk sending it to her own dorm. If Bobby happened to be along when she checked the mail, he would insist she tell him what the package was.

She clicked the final confirmation button, cutting out any second thoughts. Then she shut off the computer and crept back into bed.

#

It was three days before she found time to slip away long enough to visit Curt. Three days of knuckle-cracking and "What if's."

Her biggest fear was that Curt might eat the meat without her. She had put her own name on the delivery address, but would he notice? Would he care? If not, she had thrown away eight thousand dollars of Bobby's money.

She had arranged to meet him at four, but she couldn't wait. She skipped her English class and hurried across campus an hour early, hoping he would be home.

He was smiling as he opened the door to let her in. Ebony spotted a plain brown package sitting unopened on the counter. Her shoulders sagged in relief.

"You thought I'd open it?" Curt asked.

"Bobby would have." She rarely mentioned Bobby to anyone, but this was different. Curt was a Cannibal. They had eaten human flesh together. Normal rules didn't matter. "He acts like we're already married, and anything of mine is

his."

She opened the box and pulled out the small tin, explaining exactly what was within the tiny can.

Curt gave a soft whistle. "I shared Marilyn Monroe once at a friend's wedding. It was like... like tasting beauty itself." He held out a hand. "May I?"

She handed him the can, and he grasped it with both hands. When he spoke again, his voice was a whisper. "You know, nobody's ever proven that the Shroud of Turin actually covered Christ's body."

"I know. But if there's even a chance it could help Bobby." She told him about the cancer. Bobby would have seen it as a betrayal, would have punished her for revealing his weakness, but she couldn't stop talking.

Curt waited without interrupting until she got it all out. Her hands were shaking, and her forehead was sweaty.

"What will he do when he finds out you spent his money?" Curt asked.

She shook her head, refusing to think about it. "I can't sit there and do nothing. I can't just watch him die."

"He doesn't deserve you."

She stiffened. Holding out her hand, she said, "You don't understand."

"You're right. Part of being a Cannibal is learning to move beyond the lies. You don't really love him, but you're forcing yourself to be with him. I won't pretend I can't see it."

He made no move to return the can. "You plan to trick him into eating human flesh. Ebony, deceit goes against everything we are."

"I can't tell him." She clenched her fists to keep from snatching at Curt's hand. "What do you expect me to do?"

"You won't find your answers by lying to people." He slipped a finger beneath the ring on the lid and gave it a gentle tug. There was a metal popping sound, and then he was peeling the lid backwards. "You deserve this, Ebony. I'd be honored if you would share it with me, but it's your meat and your choice."

She took the open can from his hands. The rectangular slab of pre-cooked meat had been trimmed at the corners to create a pink cross. Waxed white cardboard held the meat's shape.

She set it on the counter and touched Curt's arm. He smiled. A gentle, open smile. Not like Bobby, whose face was always taut with suppressed pain and tension. Bobby who yelled at her for imagined slights when he was in pain, who insisted she stay awake to keep him company when he couldn't sleep, who-

"You deserve this," Curt whispered, holding her shoulders.

"No." She bit her lip, wanting to believe him.

"Do you trust me?"

Anger and guilt warred within her chest. She bit her lip and gave him a tiny nod.

He kissed her cheek and led her to the kitchen.

#

Grease splattered Ebony's shirt as she poked the meat with a spatula. The lower part of the cross had broken away. The meat was gray on the edges, making the broken section appear red by comparison.

Curt sorted through his cupboards. He finally came up with a porcelain plate, which he set next to the stove. The edge was rimmed with silver, and the center of the plate showed a nativity scene done in dark oils. "My mother used

to use this for Christmas cookies.”

She kept her attention on the stove. Bits of meat had begun to turn brown. It broke apart as she stirred, and soon the cross was nothing more than a pile of gray-brown crumbs. More grease flew, burning her hands and forearms.

“How do you want to do it?” Curt asked. “I’ve got a chili recipe that works great with human flesh. There’s also a few pasta dishes, or we could do tacos.”

“No. I can’t... not like that.” To mix the meat of Christ into a common meal felt wrong. Disrespectful. “Please just let me do this.”

He raised his hands and backed off. She wanted to apologize, but she clenched her jaw and focused on the frying pan, breaking up the few remaining clumps until she had a circle of browned meat amidst the sizzling grease.

She used the spatula to push the meat into a pile in the center of the plate. After a moment’s thought, she allowed the grease to drip down as well. It all came from the same holy flesh, right?

“Almost ready.” She sorted through the drawers until she found the aluminum foil.

She sneezed to cover the noise as she pulled off a small sheet. Using a spoon from the dish rack, she scooped a bit of the meat into the center of the foil and folded it into a flat package, rolling the edges so it wouldn’t leak. A glance into the living room showed Curt sorting through his CD collection. Ebony slipped the foil into her pocket, then smoothed the rest of the meat with the spoon to hide what she had done.

“Voila.” She carried the plate into the living room.

Instrumental Celtic music came from the speakers mounted on

corner shelves as Curt whispered over their food. “Bodies of meat, every one of us.”

They ate from the same plate. Jesus tasted bland and gritty. Grease coated the inside of Ebony’s mouth. She stifled a cough and forced herself to swallow.

Curt was staring at her. She could see the light from the window reflected in his dark eyes. He was smiling.

“What do you feel?” she whispered.

“Peaceful. Relaxed.” He took her hand. The skin between his fingers was damp. “Don’t you feel it?”

Feeling like a child, she whispered, “No.”

Her muscles were knotted and tight, like wet ropes. Every breath was shallow and quick. What was wrong with her? Curt looked so serene he could have been the Dalai Lama, and she was on the verge of tears.

She gulped another bite. Nothing.

“Stop fighting it.” He used his thumb to massage the palm of her hand.

She tried. She stretched her shoulders and worked to clear her mind of Bobby, classes, her father, everything.

“It has to work.” She wiped her cheeks with her free hand. “Why can’t I feel what you feel?”

He touched her lips. “Do you want to know what I feel?”

She closed her eyes, knowing how pitiful she must look. Sitting here crying like a little girl with a broken toy. “Please.”

She stiffened when he kissed her, but she didn’t pull away. Cannibalism was about throwing away taboos, about openness and trust.

When he led her back to his

bedroom, she followed. The touch of his fingers on her sweat-slick skin made her shiver, and his lips were warm against her neck, her chest, the palm of her hand...

Soon her worries were left behind, and there was only her body pressing against his.

#

The corners of the foil package dug into her leg as she walked across campus. Other students surrounded her, but they seemed unreal. She felt as though she could pass her hand right through the two girls who jogged past, or the bearded man digging for cans in the garbage.

The sun baked her back as she walked. She stopped at the Food Court in the Union long enough to buy a burrito from Taco Bell. She added a packet of hot sauce to help blend the leftover Jesus with the browner, finer beef. She carefully refolded the tortilla and wrapped it all up again. Bobby shouldn’t be able to tell the difference.

Curt said Bobby wasn’t right for her. Certainly Bobby had never made her feel the way she did with Curt. It had been so raw, so passionate that even the memory made her flush.

But Bobby needed her.

He was playing on his Sega when she got to his room. She set the bag on the desk and waited until he paused the game.

He grabbed the bag. “Thanks, E.”

She didn’t trust herself to speak. She had betrayed Bobby with Curt. Now she was betraying Curt by tricking Bobby into eating human flesh. She sat down on the bed so he wouldn’t notice her trembling.

“You okay?” He hadn’t touched the burrito.

She hopped up and forced a smile. “Want something to wash

that down?"

"Sure." He took a beer, downed a deep swallow, then asked, "What were you up to this afternoon?"

"What do you mean?" Why wouldn't he *eat*? One bite was all she asked.

He jerked a thumb at the clock. "Didn't you notice what time it was?"

"I was picking up dinner for-"

"And what the hell is that?"

Her necklace was clearly visible against her green shirt. She had been so distracted that she forgot to tuck it away when she left Curt's. Bobby hooked a finger through the necklace and tugged her forward. The leather held, and she found herself bent double as he examined the pendant.

"Spam?"

"Can't we talk about it after you eat?"

"We'll talk now." He dragged her to the bed and pushed her down. "Who is he?"

"Who?"

"Whoever you've been sneaking off with. You think I haven't noticed the change? What's his name?"

Fear made her hesitate, and hesitation gave her away. Bobby's jaw clenched. When she tried to rise, he punched her in the side of the throat. She fell, gagging for breath. He climbed on top of her and pinned her shoulders to the mattress.

"Bobby," she gasped. Where were the words to make him understand, to make him *believe*? She had brought his salvation.

"Who is he?" he asked again.

He raised a fist. "His name is Curt," she blurted.

Bobby straightened, and she used his surprise to smash her elbow into his nose. He fell back, bleeding.

A part of her wanted to stay. She wanted to believe that Bobby wouldn't really hurt her.

She grabbed the untouched burrito and fled.

#

At first, Ebony found herself walking toward Curt's apartment. She veered away, stopping instead at the river behind the psychology building. With the sun set, the faint spray of the water chilled her skin. The calls of the ducks seemed distant and distorted. Her throat ached every time she inhaled, and she could still feel Bobby's fingers digging into her arms. She wouldn't be able to wear a tank top until the bruises faded.

"Hey Ebony!" A figure waved from across the river. Martin, aka *Cannibal Clown*. She waved back and watched him change direction toward the bridge.

If Curt believed in openness and honesty, why hadn't he wanted to share the meat of Christ with the other Cannibals?

Martin jogged up to her and gave her a hug. "What's up, girl?"

She placed her necklace in his hand.

"I see," he said, his face suddenly serious. "Is this because of your boyfriend?"

"No, it's..." She bit her lip. Cannibalism obviously worked for Martin. He was confident, relaxed, open - the perfect Cannibal, following all of the tenets Curt had described.

Ebony was tired of being a follower. "I'm having a hard time believing in it."

He sighed. "Folks are gonna be bummed. But I guess you know what's best for you."

"Yeah... I guess I do."

He glanced at the night sky and shoved his hands into his pockets. "You want me to walk you wherever

you're heading?"

"No thanks. I'd rather be alone for a while."

She waited for him to leave, then sat down on a concrete bench by the water. She stayed there for nearly an hour, listening to the water and tossing bits of burrito to the ducks.

When the last of the food was gone, she headed back to the dorm - her own dorm - stopping only to discard the crumpled wrapper in a trash can.

THE END



Your pulse races...

Strange faces surround you, but they will not help...

With every step, you are more lost...

In every shadow: threat, fear, pain...

Hell, it's just another Friday night in New York.

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Two-Faced Woman

By L. Lynn Young

MARYANNE'S BOOBS WERE PARASITIC TWINS.

Hello. Testing. One, two, three. Chicken. Chiiiiickennnn.

Okay. I thought it would be a good idea to explain some stuff. Leave, like, a daily journal type of thing. Maybe Ann Rule will get her hands on this someday...

I'm not one hundred percent sure that I want to die. And the thought of killing my sister makes me feel all icky inside, so maybe I'm just yapping for the sake of yapping. I do like to hear myself talk. Most of the time, it's the only voice I hear.

My sister doesn't say much, usually grunts or sighs, depending on her mood. Sometimes I can make her laugh, but that's a rare thing. Her humor is much different than mine.

For instance, when we were fourteen or so, I tripped over Grandpa Howell's oxygen tank, fell on my face. The tank crashed to the hardwood floor, made a huge dent. Missy laughed so hard, a wheezy whistle of a laugh, then laughed even louder when Grandpa, making his own wheezy whistles, struggled to lift the tank, his mask hanging from his old chins. I didn't think it was funny. Not at all.

Maryanne, Grandpa's nurse, took care of things though. She'd rushed in, her gigantic boobs entering the room first, and up-righted the tank, replaced Grandpa's mask, after which, she gave me one of her nasty looks, told me to go to my room. I wanted

to smoosh those boobs of hers, pummel them like Play Doh, make shapes out of them, bury my face in between them, cover my ears with boob-ear muffs. Anyway.

Maryanne was gorgeous, but she used to tell horrible stories. I would hear her on the phone, talking with her friends while Grandpa napped. She would smile and say terrible things like, "Sickest family I've ever seen" and "God put the mark on that girl." Stuff like that.

I never said a word to Mother, not one word, because Maryanne could be nice sometimes. She's the one who got me reading, gave me all her used books. I know that she only wanted to keep me out of her hair, keep me busy, keep me in my room. I was sad when Grandpa died because that meant no more books, but Mother seemed almost pleased with his death, relieved that Maryanne would no longer be around.

AS SHE LAY SLEEPING AND I STARED AT THE WALL.

Mother didn't believe in books, except, of course, the Holy Bible, refused to buy them for me, though she tolerated my donated ones. But she did like old movies. She bought me a twenty-seven inch Sylvania, a DVD, put them in the corner of my and Missy's room. I own a lot of Bette Davis flicks, whom I love. "Dark Victory" is amazing. My favorite movie of all

time has to be “Casablanca,” though. I think I look a teeny bit like Ingrid Bergman, except my nose isn’t as pretty.

I hate my bedroom now. Oh, it’s large enough for the three of us, actually kind of pretty, too, with its canopy bed and frilly curtains, but it smells weird, like bad thoughts, like Grandpa Howell’s breath. It was nice at first, having Mother all to myself. I must’ve hugged her nonstop for two days straight, just lay on my floor with her and held on for dear life. I wrapped my fingers around her long hair, pressed my nose into it, and went to sleep with my father’s “Are You Experienced?” tape playing softly. Slept like a baby, too. Then the weird smell came and ruined everything.

I had two bookcases, both filled to the ceiling. Sometimes at night, I could hear the boards creaking under the weight of all the books. It was a comforting sound, like the books were singing to me. The singing’s the only thing I miss about our room; the guest room is much better because it smells like wood polish and fresh linen. David says that he will put up some bookshelves for me, but I’m not holding my hand on my butt waiting. I’ll just keep my books stacked against the wall for now.

WORSHIP MY EYE, BITCH.

Too bad Missy can’t read; besides the obvious reasons, her eyes are messed up, and she can only see out of one, but even that eye appears a little iffy. I think. She never answers when I ask if this is true. Anyway, she can’t read, which is a shame, really. Passes the time, makes life livable, in my opinion. I like all books, be they romance, horror, mystery. All are worthy, and all of their authors are my own personal saviors. I worship each and every one.

Mother worshiped Jesus Christ, which is all right. She went to church every Sunday, came home all red-eyed, her nose swollen, like she’d been drinking her Bacardi or something. She looked terrible when she drank her Bacardi, even her boyfriend said so, hypocrite that he was, repulsive pig. He liked it when Mother drank because then he could take her up to her bedroom and make her scream. When he fell down the stairs and broke his neck, it was one of the happiest times of my life.

Anyway, I used to wonder why anyone would

bother to go to a place that was sad, but now I understand her tears. She was mourning. And church was the only place she felt safe enough to express her torment, her loss, her hate. I would’ve gone, too, if she’d only let me. I’ve a lot of torment to express. I’d like to wear a bra, for instance. I’d like to wear tight-fitting clothes and have my hair long, grow it to the top of my tailbone. I would like to be a woman, not a thing. I want to be beautiful, like an angel. Perhaps I’ll go to church someday. Sure I will. And I’ll eat my own excrement while I’m there, throw some poop at the pulpit.

CALLING HER A SLUT WOULD BE TOO KIND.

Missy is uncomfortable when I wear bras - I suppose I would be too, if I had an elastic strap constantly digging into my chin - so I only wear them on special occasions. I always put one on when David makes a delivery. I’ve been ordering a lot of pizza lately. Mother insisted that I wear one whenever her boyfriend visited, or when Pastor Beale dropped by for a cup of tea, but I didn’t have to for Mrs. Koontz. Mrs. Koontz wouldn’t, as my mother put it, “think bad thoughts” about my “fat cow udders.” Whatever that meant.

Missy and I were usually sent to our room when company called, but sometimes, when Mother was feeling especially generous, she allowed us to stay for dinner. I have a special chair that I use at the table, a stool, really. That way Missy won’t be crushed. David asked me once why I choose to sit on that instead of the pillow-seated hardbacks; I reached for his zipper, he forgot all about the chairs.

I wear my bra and put on Mother’s silver-pink lipstick, her thin, silky robe, and pretend that I am Ingrid Bergman. I go on my knees, the taste of mozzarella still on my tongue, and pretend that I am a woman. I believe that Missy knows what I’m doing, and I know that she doesn’t approve. I must occasionally cover up her angry noises with my own moans and sighs, which, thank goodness, seems to excite David. I tried stuffing some paper towel in her mouth, but she always managed to spit it out.

LIE NUMBER ONE.

Missy doesn’t eat. Mother used to attempt

feeding Missy, when we were infants. The doctors told her that it was unnecessary; Missy's vital organs were really mine, so any nourishment I took was plenty for the both of us. Besides, Missy doesn't have an esophagus or a stomach. Still, as instinct would serve, Mother felt the need to give Missy her breast, but the milk always dribbled out of Missy's mouth and wound up soaking my gowns.

Mother finally gave up trying to feed Missy, though she did give her a pacifier. According to Mother, Missy had the most horrible cry, an unnaturally loud and annoying cry that caused Mother's hair to stand on end. It also, according to her, was one of the reasons my father left. The doctors were puzzled, of course, because Missy is supposedly incapable of making any sound at all. Mother's internist prescribed a little green pill, told Mother to take it every night before bedtime, but Mother still heard the crying.

Missy doesn't cry anymore, but she does make some strange noises, I'll say that much.

TEETH? WHAT TEETH?

So David made the mistake of running his hands down my back, completely my fault. I shouldn't have strayed from my no-kissing policy, but I was so hot for him. . .wasn't thinking straight. Missy bit his finger, bit him right through the silk, drew blood and everything. He screamed and hopped around the dining room, flapped his hand.

I got him a Band-Aid, tried to apply it for him, but he slapped it away. His eyes were wide and his mouth kept opening and closing like he wanted to ask me something, but he never asked. He walked to the door instead.

DAVID NO LIKE, DAVID RUN LIKE HELL.

Wonder where David's been. I ordered a medium with extra cheese last Friday, but some girl delivered it. This afternoon I ordered a large with pepperoni and mushrooms, even though I wasn't hungry. An old man with a limp delivered that one.

Two dollars left. Mother's Hendrix cookie jar, which used to be my father's, almost empty of quarters now, sets on the counter and stares at me with its cow eyes. It doesn't resemble Hendrix in the least, rather, it's bovine in appearance, with big brown bovine eyes

and over-size lips, like Elsie the Cow. If it could talk, I'm sure it would mock me, show me its big teeth and moo at me. "Stupid girl-oooo. Moooooove over and let Jimi take over."

Two dollars. I threw the pizza away.

LIE NUMBER TWO.

She is a face, Missy, and nothing more. The doctors said that she has a rudimentary brain, some tissue. They said that she's not a person, but an unusual appendage that happens to have a mouth, nose and eyes: Acardius-Acephalus, a parasitic twin.

The doctors referred to Missy as "it." We called her a "girl," but honestly, you can't tell either way. There are papers dedicated to us, whole volumes, all having to do with us. We are important, but not in the way we'd like. I enjoyed our visits to the hospital, however, because then we got to see The Things Outside, really see. The Things Outside that rushed past us as we rode in the car were breathtakingly real, so real, it overwhelmed me, made me cry. Missy, I believe, enjoyed our short trips, too. I sat sideways in the seat so that I could look out one window and she the other.

One of these days, I'd think to myself, I'm going to tell Doctor Russo how Mother keeps me and Missy in the house. I wondered how he'd feel about that. I know how I felt. Though I learned reading and writing with the help of my tutor, Mrs. Koontz, I always longed for a real desk, real school. I needed a playmate that didn't live on my back, someone who could play jacks with me and dress up dollies and tell me secrets. Missy's wheezy, growly secrets were never very much fun.

Mrs. Koontz brought her daughter over to play once. That didn't go very well. Mother fired Mrs. Koontz, so I never learned fractions or geometry. I was thirteen.

Around that same time, Mother fired Doctor Russo, too. She said that she was sick and tired of him wanting to kill Missy. That was one of the few times in my life that I cried so hard I puked. I missed Doctor Russo, but I hated him, too, for wanting to kill Missy.

HUMPHERY BOGART WAS FUCKING UGLY.

I would like a boyfriend who looks like Humphery Bogart and sings like Frank Sinatra, a boyfriend who is nice to me, buys me candy and flowers and takes me for rides in his red convertible. A boyfriend who doesn't mind my cut-out shirts and short hair.

Yeah, like that'll ever happen.

LIE NUMBER THREE.

I'd asked Mother many times to tell me about my father, but she always found a way to change the subject. She'd suddenly see a fox by the shed in our backyard, or grab her elbow and claim that her bursitis was acting up. I would've liked to have heard her side of the story. She never realized that I'd snooped through her things, found her newspaper clippings, letters, pictures. She didn't know that I already knew all about my father, who he was, what she did to him.

Still, I'd have liked to hear her side.

I can't imagine being in her shoes.

I am disgusted with the thought of what she and my father did, but I also feel sorry for them. My life certainly isn't a bed of roses, but theirs was truly hellish. I guess they had to deal the best way they knew how, and I kind of respect them for that. We all need someone to love, need affection and comfort. They only had each other, the two of them against the world. Then there was just one, alone, betrayed. One must do what one can to survive. Yeah.

Mother also didn't know that I stole a picture of them. It's a cute picture, Mother and Father as children, both wearing matching red plaid shirts and dark blue jeans. Mother's hair is tied up high on her head with a big red bow, and Father's is crew cut. They appear to be around nine or ten years old. They're smiling at something beyond the camera lens, arm and arm. I can see the top of a Ferris wheel in the distant background, a multi-colored tent. When I first saw this picture, I felt a little jealous. They got to go to the fair, at least. But then I remembered what was hidden behind their bright smiles, and I felt guilty for feeling jealous.

There are no pictures of me and Missy. There should be a nice portrait of us hanging on the living room wall, a professional portrait, one that is dreamy-

looking, kind of fuzzy around the edges, like the one of Mother and Father that sets on Mother's bureau.

LIE NUMBER FOUR.

Mother let it slip once, after she'd hit the Bacardi a bit too much and hadn't eaten dinner, that my father hated Missy, said she was evil. He said that her eyes creeped him out, the way they followed him. She said that he used to cover Missy with our receiving blankets, swaddle us tightly like a baby burrito and put me on my back. She said that the last time she found us like that, she also discovered that Missy's left eye was bleeding, like it'd been gouged, so she slapped him across his face. Yeah, she slapped him all right, slapped him with a cast iron skillet is what she did. Over and over again.

After she told me this, she sobbed for, like, an hour, said that God would forgive her. I read those clippings in the newspapers, and I do believe she's right. If the people of New York can forgive her, why wouldn't God?

THE STICK WAS REALLY A BIG WOODEN FORK, LIKE THE KIND PEOPLE PUT ON THEIR KITCHEN WALL.

Mother wailed every time she hit me, wailed to Jesus, begged for forgiveness. She trained me to sleep on my side by waking me with the stick. I don't think I slept an entire night the first two years of my life. Those are my earliest memories: nighttimes, stick, Mother's wailings. I don't know about Jesus, but I'm sure that I forgave her each and every time. I was her little baby Jesus.

But I grew up, of course, and I'm certainly not Jesus. The stick was a daily reminder of that. Didn't matter that I towered over her by the time I was sixteen. That stick was law. It was Mother's power, her magic tool, her equalizer, her love enforcer.

She knew, I'm sure, how I loved her so much it bordered on hatred.

When Mother died, it was as if my egg-world exploded, like a baby chick, I was left without my protective shell, cold and confused and crying for Mother. And I'd never felt so alive. I am crazed by my own freedom, my and Missy's, and it is overwhelming,

real, like The Things Outside.

Screw me. The truth is, I'm nothing but a gloppy blob of albumin, an undeveloped mess of bones and glued-shut eyes.

LOOK, SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO KILL YOUR MOTHER.

The church people called and called, all of them concerned about Mother's "pneumonia," and a few stopped over, but I never opened my home to them, told them that Mother was studying Judaism while she recuperated. Told Pastor Beale that Mother found comfort in a new man, Rabbi Winterman. I was glad when they left me alone for good. I ate all the casseroles and pies myself, gained five whole pounds. The church people have not come back for their dishes and tins, despite their names scrawled on masking tape on the bottom of each and every one.

Wish I'd saved some of that food.

EVEN LYSOL DISINFECTANT SPRAY WON'T WORK.

The flies are getting awful. The babies crawl under the door and make their way downstairs, invade the kitchen. The weird smell seems to have followed them, too, which is worrying me. I can hardly breathe, my insides are filled with bad thoughts, my lungs bursting with stink. Perhaps I will go outside soon.

I should go touch The Things Outside...

Let the wind wash my hair...

My lungs...

Make snow angels...

I used to watch the neighbor's children play in the snow, and it frightened me because they yelled so much. I thought that the snow was hurting them, but I know better now.

I FEEL WEIRD, TOO. EAT SOMETHING, YOU ASSHOLE.

I've been dreaming of pork chops. Strange, really, because I never liked pork chops. Yet I dream of those fat little slabs, breaded, fried, smothered in barbeque sauce. They taste really good in my dreams. Sometimes they dance around on my plate, like they're

avoiding my fork, hopping to the left, to the right, and my fork hits plate, scrapes the china. The sound makes my teeth hurt. The pain feels like when you hit your funny bone, electric, cold. So I dive in face first and catch the chops in my tingling teeth.

I'M NOT DYING, RETARD. I'M JUST REALLY, REALLY TIRED.

To the world, but especially David, the delivery guy who may still work at Guda Pizza...

Her name is Missy. Please don't forget that she had a name, okay?

I think Missy is dying, I really do. I haven't heard a peep out of her for days. And her good eye hasn't moved, even when I make like I'm going to poke it. She is silent, peaceful. She is filled, as I am, with Mother, and it is appropriate, ironic. Mother finally got her way and nourished Missy with herself, with poisonous phantom breath, and Missy is quiet at long last.

WALK TO THE STORE. TO THE NEIGHBORS. GET SOME BOLOGNA. WALK, YOU WHORE. WALK.

I am now one hundred percent sure.

My sweet, darling Missy, thank you for dying so I won't have to kill you.

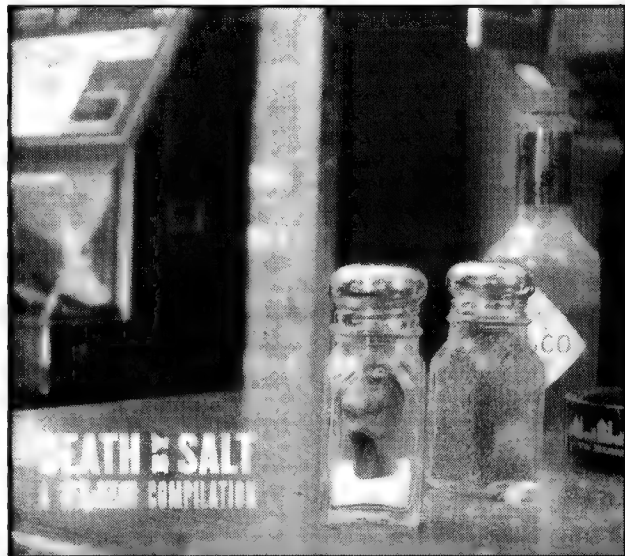
When the moon rises tonight, I will lie on my back for the very first time, naked, free, and mourn. I will wail at the stars while making wings, kick my legs, leave our impression for all to see. It will be the most beautiful angel on earth.

So fuck you all, and goodbye.

Various – Death By Salt (Slug)

Here at Brutarian we often come up blank when asking ourselves about what, we are sure, are the many good things hailing from Utah, land of the Great Salt Lake. Let's see, there's the Utah Jazz and Donny and Marie and ummm, oh, hmmm, were not both Carnival of Souls and Faster Pussycat Kill! Kill! filmed here? Oh yes, Slug Magazine, a way cool rock and kulchur mag calls Mormon country home. Quite professional, arrestingly graphified and best of all, the boys and girls involved display impeccable taste in their coverage of the Ute scene.

Obviously the staff got tired of talking about how the rest of the world was missing out on the groovy happenings in what most of us believe to be a Boney Moroni stronghold. To disabuse us of this notion, Slug graces us with not one, not two, but three discs of music featuring fifty-nine bands. Most of which, for one reason or another, surprises with its surpassing goodness. On the first disc alone we were charmed beyond endurance by the sloppy hard rock of the Red Bennies, the AC-DCish poundings of Thunderfist, the dada monochromatics of the Purr Bats and the calculatingly fatigued beat punk of The New Evils. Had'st we world enough and time, we would go on ad infinitum, ad nauseum; as we do not, and you, more than likely, do not.....and, as this lovely little comp comes dirt cheap and accompanied with booklet with lovely pics and pithy bios of each and every one of the bands appearing herein, ergo and forsooth and verily, we strongly suggest you write todeathbysalt@slugmag.com. Tell them fallen Catholics sent you to drink from their cup.



Various – Punch Drunk V (TKO)



From the little rock label headquartering in the former capital of the confederacy, Richmond, Virginia, comes a two disc comp of prime punk. Yes, yes, yes, there's nothing new under the three chord sun, and most attempts to recreate those halcyon days of yore strikes the heady listener as vanity of vanities; nevertheless, the majority of these exercises play better than most of the stuff made in the anarchistic hey-ho-let's-go days of 77-78. Nothing as sublime as The Clash or The Sex Pistols, but we have Antiseen doing The Ramones and Texas Terri doing Iggy, and that's damn fine, as these are two of the more incendiary acts treading the

boards at the moment. We even have historical figures, Slaughter & The Dogs performing a live number, just to prove how new and improved these updated takes on old school are. Every band has one or two good songs in them and TKO, salty old dogs that they are, appear to have ensured, with their song selection, that even relative newcomers like New York Re.X and Broken Bottles put their best foot forward. One star docked from a five star rating for fostering the delusion and concomitant anguish that this collection was a two disc set by breaking down the thirty cuts into a side one and a side two on the back of the CD.

HorrorPops – Hell Yeah! (HellCat)

So ask yourself what's in a name and then ask yourself if you'd be surprised that a band with such a moniker is something of an oxymoron. That's right, "horror" and "pop" do not go together, but give the HorrorPops an "A" for the old fashioned college try. The Danish sextet fronted by heavily tattooed, upright bassist/vocalist Patricia Nekroman, attempts to groove to the ghoulish garage and psychobilly crypt kicking of pioneers like the Misfits and The Cramps, but there is simply too much sweetness and light here, more whoa oh's than howls, more naughtiness than depravity. Where Lux and Ivy would have you believing that they'd sell their soul for an obscure Charlie Feathers' record, these Popsters sound more like they're whistling past the graveyard. Except on four wonderful cuts where the posing is cut, the Gwen Sefani imitations are dropped, and the band reaches down deep into their depraved subconscious and just flat out gits it: "Cool Flat Top" rocks them bones in a way that would do Ronnie Dawson proud; "Psychobitches Outta Hell," sounds like it was written by one; "Dotted With Hearts" could have been a cut off the classic Blondie debut; and "Horror Beach" is a wonderfully spooky take on Dick Dale pyrotechnics. While four cuts out of thirteen do not a CD make, they hint at what the band could accomplish if they learned to trust their instincts and their considerable taste and junked those dreams of Casey Kasem and the American Top 40.

Singapore Sling – Life Is Killing My Rock And Roll (Stinko)

Nothing is more delightful than to confuse and upset people. Iceland's Singapore Sling appear to be

continuing the tack taken with their first release by asking the unwashed multitudes to consider whether they are channeling the Velvet Underground through the Jesus and Mary Chain, The The or, perhaps, Joy Division or Suicide. This is good; to wit, that is to argue, to dispute, to get excited. The rest is grist for toffee-nosed snits. The disputations expected when you have a vocalist affecting a dispassionate monotone o'er choppy seas of feedback and distortion. One's thoughts do drift toward Lou and Ian and those stalwart brand of monochromatic brothers. "Curse Curse Curse," a current favorite, presents sinuous and quietly coruscating distorto guitar solos plied against an infectiously unassuming yet insinuating riff. Delicious, yet leaves us dreaming of more Sling songs reliance on strong melodic figures, as opposed to dependency on melancholic atmospherics and knob twirling. Although there are times when this preciousness works to the good as with "Let's Go Dancing," the disc's closer, which mixes a number of high frequency electronic sequences, chiming guitar figures and chanted vocals amidst a blizzard of white noise to create a lovely bit of ur-pop.



Sands of Time – Clive Palmer (Unique Gravity)

The founder and initially guiding light of The Incredible String Band returns after years in exile where he where he . . . Right, we have no idea what the hell Clive was doing, and after speaking with him recently, we're not sure

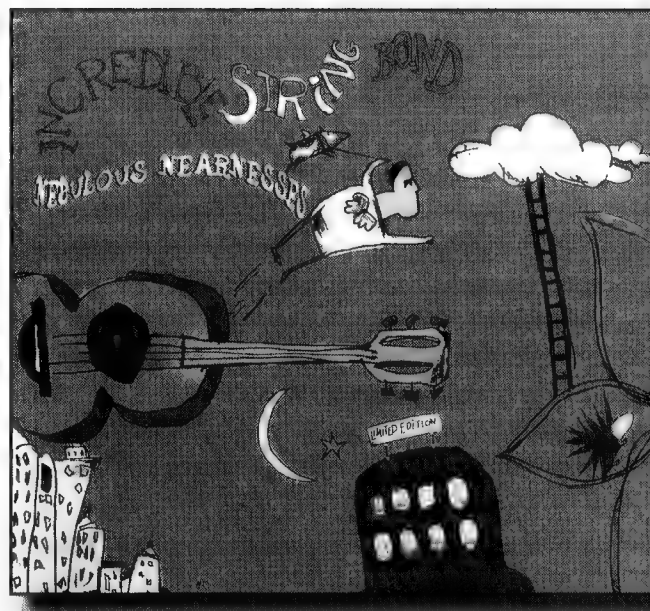
he even knows or cares. Obviously, at least some of the time, Clive was composing the songs for this minimalist folkie disc which, at first blush, appears to consist of little more than Clive's primitive, plaintively plucked banjo and his earnest, haunted vocals. Sands of Time takes a number of spins before things start to get through. Stay with it, avoid the voice telling you that Clive must be, has to be, some demented, aging geezer dozing off on the porch with the dog. You'll start to notice things – the sweet unobtrusive female voices of "Oh For Summer," the wordless prayer over Arabic pipes in "Breizh," the subtle and tender interplay of sax, accordion and double bass in Errol Garner's "Paris." Listen closer: to the "birds singing so sweetly," even though there's not much sweetness in the song. Nor much "swinging" when Clive talks about "swing[ing] the blues all through the night." In fact, there's not even a hint of the blues. There's something deeper here, though, as with all the songs. Deeper and more profound, and if you're patient and willing to carefully mine the musical and lyrical epiphanies quietly lying in wait for you, the sudden scholar of quiet, you will find yourself amply rewarded.

The Paybacks – Harder and Harder (Get Hip)

Hard not to fall in love with Wendy Case; she's got a big booming boisterous voice that just reaches out and grabs you. And just doesn't let go, begging, demanding you watch her roll all her love and sweetness and brashness into one little ball and bowl it down rough strife alley. Yeah, her tone is a little rough around the edges, and sometimes she barely manages to stay in tune; nevertheless, you can't turn away. 'Cause there's tenderness and vulnerability there mixed in with the braggadocio. She'd go the whole wide world for the man who would do her right. You cross her, she'd probably knock you on your ass. Harder and Harder, the group's sophomore effort, mixes the best and worst of metal and garage into eleven concise infectious riff-happy little packages and lets Wendy ride hard o'er top of it all. Messiness and a take-no-prisoners attack on the slings and arrows of outrageous romantic fortune and the vicissitudes of life. "Scotch Love": why guys and gals and love all tumble down the same way and there's no accounting. Can it ever be good enough? Probably not, you're older now and missed a number of opportunities at love and happiness ("Lazy Things"); still, you can thrust a middle finger at Dame Fortune and drink and party ("Can

You Drive") and look on the "Bright Side." You don't have to ask for more. Although the "more" is here in the form of a number of hot and nasty guitar distractions. You've heard those six-string tropes before, and Wendy's coming from corners you've spent a lot of time investigating, yet what matter that? Harder and Harder makes it all sound new and fresh and alluring and dirty, and that's rock and roll. Right? Don't hate her and The Paybacks because she has "sweets to share" and it all feels so goddamn good.

Incredible String Band – Nebulous Nearness (Amoeba)



So here we are, some thirty-odd-plus years from the Summer of Love. In these parlous times, the standard bearers of the let-your-freak-flag fly aesthetic have returned, bringing us hope and good cheer. Robin Williamson jumped off; nevertheless, he attends, courtesy of "Ducks On A Pond" and "The Water Song." Founding member Clive Palmer sits in and fleshes things out. Listen, oh listen, as it is to thee they sing: folk song of English speak mixed with Blake and Keats and the musical tropes of Middle and Far East. Instant karma and the inner light and peace to you, my brothers and sisters. I love what you do and do your thing and do dah do dah do dah. Knocking on your door and telling you that you and me and those you don't know are, nevertheless, those you might, just possibly might, be able to love best. Magic words and thoughts absurd leading us to an/the overwhelming question: Sing and look for paradise which might and

should be all around. Farewell sorrow, I ain't go no home in this world any more. Move towards song and art and beauty. There lies revelation. Look inside your painting box and see the colors that are you and everything that is true.

The Barn Burners – Shot Down **(Atomic Twang)**

We promised our friends, Bal'more's Barn Burners, we'd let everyone know how good this alt. rock band is. Well, don't take it from us, Hon, here's how good: despite releasing only three discs, the Burners already have a pinball machine built and named for them. Damn, that's sure to impress most people, doncha think? 'Specially in France, where le flipper-play is something of a national pastime. The French are also sure to find *tres amusant* the literary aspect of The Barn Burners, as one of the songs is taken from a poem; another, "Yesterday's Clothes," sounds like it was written by Lou Reed circa '69; and a Hank Williams composition, "Moanin' The Blues," is, well, it's a Hank Williams song, and so it's just educated to attempt to interpret it. Yet there's nothing pretentious about the Baltimoreans brand of heartbreak, betrayal and hard living. Just the opposite, since most of this is offered up with a sly wink and a knowing tip of the hat. That's what makes the idiot serial dater in "Cheatin' to Lose," more a loveable loser than a symbol for man's hound dog

ways, and the cuckolded lover in "Throwin' Your Life Away," more comic than maudlin, as his cutting wit is such that he unintentionally betrays who was really at fault for the relationship's failure. See, that's all literary because it involves irony. But enough of this deconstructionist interpretation, the primary thing is that this is roots rock with a strong dash of country by a quartet that ain't skeered to take on r&b with Smokey Robinson's "Throwin' Your Life Away," blues in "Mud in My Eyes," honky-tonk and rockabilly. Oh yeah, I you're wondering whether the band is engaging in a little braggadocio with the name, check out the incendiary "Shot Down" and "Said the 7 to the 11," they rock like nobody's business.



A-Bones - Daddy Wants A Cold Beer (Norton)

The first time I saw the A-Bones was at the old 9:30 Club in Washington, DC, about 18-19 years ago. All I knew about the band was that it featured Norton label honchos Billy Miller (vocals) and Miriam Linna (drums), formerly of The Zantees. They took the stage and immediately launched headfirst into a totally chaotic and seemingly unrehearsed version of the Stones' arrangement of Larry Williams' "She Said Yeah". My first reaction was - this is the worst band I'd ever heard, aside from several amateur combos I rehearsed with back in high school in the 60's. About 3 or 4 equally bad songs later (AND 3 or 4 drinks later), it dawned on me that these guys were having a shit load of fun on stage, and I was having fun too! By the end of their set (no encore, if I recall), I was convinced that the A-Bones were a great rock & roll band, in spite of their apparent lack of musical skills and cohesiveness as a band. I felt the same way every other time I saw them live throughout the 80's.

Fast forward to September 2004, the Gold Coast in Las Vegas, at the Rockaround. Appearing late Saturday night - the A-Bones, for a 20th anniversary reunion show. They looked about the same - Lars the sax player (and the only one I've ever seen who smokes cigarettes throughout a set) had put on some weight, bassist Marcus the Carcass had lost some, and Miriam, guitarist Bruce Bennett and Billy hadn't apparently aged (although the always yummy looking Ms. Linna was now a blonde). Upon taking the stage, they blasted right into "She Said Yeah"....sounding exactly like they did the first time I saw them...if anything, perhaps a bit less rehearsed! Once again, I had to remind myself - give it 3-4 more songs, have some drinks, and I'll be having a great time (although I can't hop around like I used to...after a number of surgeries, various body parts may fall off.....). I had tons of drinks, and dammit, I was right, the A-Bones are still a great live act! To commemorate their 20th anniversary, Billy & Miriam and the gang at Norton released this new double CD set, basically collecting all of their old 45 tracks and EP's in one place. Honestly, listening to this collection is like one of their live shows to a large extent. Taken a track at a time, it's hit or miss.....but sitting and listening to one of the disks all the way through is great fun. The 2nd disk includes most of their recordings with other artistes, including Roy Loney (who sat in with them in Vegas for a couple of songs), the Great Gaylord (ditto), Rudy Grayzell, Johnny Powers, and the 5.6.7.8's (also there in Vegas). I don't know if they plan on reuniting for more shows and records...if so, I'll be there.....if not, thanks, guys (and Miriam)!

Magic Christian - Magic Christian ("authorized bootleg" on Repeat Records)

After hanging up his trusty plexiglass Dan Armstrong axe about 12 years ago (following a 25 year career in various versions of The Flamin'Groovies - always making great music, usually to critical acclaim, but never making a real commercial breakthrough and the accompanying big bucks), Cyril Jordan has returned to the music wars. He has a new band called Magic Christian that features the creme de la creme of San Francisco rock & roll as a rhythm section - Prairie Prince from the Tubes, Jefferson Starship and other bands on drums, and Alec Palao of the Sneetches, Chocolate Watch Band and various other groups on bass, along with Cyril on guitar, vocals and songwriting, and a talented newcomer, Paul Kopf, one of the originators/coordinators of the Bay Pop Festivals, on lead vocals. Try as he might (see interview in this issue), it will be almost impossible for Cyril to break free of

the Flamin' Groovies legacy and tradition - anything he records will be compared with his previous work. I'll try to resist that temptation, and talk about the new CD set on its own terms.

This "authorized bootleg" set consists of 13 songs (11 penned by Cyril, plus covers of the Lovin' Spoonful's "My Gal" and The Who's "I Can See For Miles") recorded in the studio over the past 2 years, plus a second disk of Magic Christian's debut show from April 1, 2004, at the Great American Music Hall in SF - 10 of the songs from the studio disk, plus a set opening cover of the Easybeats' "Made My Bed (Gonna Lie In It)". The studio material will be issued shortly on Rykodisk under the title "Too Close To Zero", the name of the rocking Stones-flavored leadoff track, which has been featured on Steve Van Zandt's Underground Garage radio show. It's evident from the start of the new CD that Cyril's 60's style songwriting and guitar chops are still as formidable as ever. He's always had a way with a catchy hook, and this new material has tons of them - from the opener and other Stones' tinged tunes, "She's So Good", "Right Back Where I Started", "Til I Looked In Her Eyes", and the Ruby Tuesday-ish "Angel", to the Beatles-esque "Things She Said", "No Time To Cry", and "Ride The Light". The covers - "My Gal", which was dedicated to the late Zal Yanovsky at the 4/1/04 show, is a cross between Sun rockabilly and "I Saw Her Standing There", and "I Can See For Miles" is arranged close to the original without being a slavish copy (great raunchy guitar solo!) . In some cases, I like the studio versions of songs; in others, the GAMH show live versions are a bit more muscular. Cyril's guitar playing, especially on the live set, is vicious, sort of a cross between his old style and Pete Townshend. Paul Kopf's fine vocals, following in the footsteps of Roy Loney and Chris Wilson (SORRY, I said earlier I wouldn't draw such comparisons!), could be described as Jagger-esque with a higher range. His vocal harmonies with Cyril hit the spot and then some on the poppier tunes. The rhythm section is rock solid. A very worthy addition to Mr. Jordan's recorded legacy.... and, rumor has it, he's written enough new songs for yet another LP/CD. Welcome back, Cyril! This'll finish high in my "Best of" list for 2004. (NOTE: If you REALLY want a comparison between Magic Christian and the Flamin' Groovies....the new band is a bit more melodic/pop-oriented than the Loney-era Groovies, but harder rocking than the Wilson-era FGs.)

Nathaniel Mayer - I Just Want To Be Held (Fat Possum)

Here's yet another crazy old R&B/soul singer who's been resurrected by Fat Possum. Nathaniel Mayer had several hit records as a teenager, including "Village Of Love", "I Had A Dream", and "I Want Love and Affection (Not The House of Correction)" on the Fortune label out of Detroit in the early 60's. Much like label-mate Andre Williams, Mr. Mayer was known more for his outrageous live shows and foolish/drunken behavior than his recordings. Here he is 40 years later, fronting a primitive garage soul band led by ex-Detroit Cobra Jeff Meier, and good God amighty, this is righteous stuff! Mayer's voice nowadays is hard to describe - on the blues-oriented songs, he sounds a bit like Howlin' Wolf might have, had he lived to 95 or had a really bad cold (or both). On the funkier stuff, James Brown comes to mind. Then, on the slower numbers, his crooning sounds as sweet as it did on his old records. Mayer covers two of his older songs here ("From Now On" and "Leave Me Alone", both B-sides), in addition to a stack o' new tunes. The highlights, in addition to the two re-recordings, are the opener, "I Wanna Dance With You", the risqué "Stick It or Lick It", and, in my opinion, the best ever version of John Lennon's "I Found Out". Get this - you'll like it.

New York Dolls - Pre-Crash Condition (Attack/Sanctuary)

I've been involved in quite a few heated debates on the internet over whether David Johansen and Syl Sylvain, the remaining (and only living) members of the New York Dolls should be resurrecting the old music and the name. I've seen the reunited Dolls twice (Underground Garage Festival in NYC in August, and at the Fillmore in SF on October 3, 2004), and thoroughly enjoyed both of their sets. While I sympathize with Johnny Thunders devotees who argue that the Dolls ain't the Dolls without JT....and, while I was/am a huge Thunders fan myself, and would have preferred David Jo and Syl to have called themselves something other than the NY Dolls (howsabout "The Johansen/Sylvain Band with Ringers, performing the music of the New York Dolls"?), dammit, this is great fucking music being played by an excellent band!!! Being able to hear these classic tunes played again with such

religious fervor, to me, more than makes up for whatever name they choose to call themselves.

This new live CD was culled from their first 2 comeback shows, at the Meltdown Festival at the Royal Festival Hall in London on June 16 and 18, 2004, coordinated by one Morrissey, formerly the head of the UK NY Dolls Fan Club, later the front man for the ultimate band for depressed or suicidal Gays everywhere, The Smiths. Morrissey's the one who convinced David, Syl and the recently deceased Arthur "Killer" Kane to reunite. For that, we all owe him a huge debt of thanks. The 13 songs here represent most of the debut LP, plus several tossed in from Too Much, Too Soon. However....this should have been a double CD set, and should have included the great covers they've been playing - notably, "Piece Of My Heart" (a definite highlight at the Fillmore show), the Shangri-Las' "Out In The Streets", and Memphis Minnie's "My Girlish Ways"- as well as the remaining Dolls Classics ("Pills", "Mystery Girls" and "It's Too Late" were also left off). I believe these missing pieces will be included on the upcoming DVD of the London shows. To get to the one question I've been avoiding - how is the replacement for Thunders, one Steve Conte (of Company of Wolves, the Crown Royals, and Billy Squier's band)? He hits all the right (and some deliberately wrong, I'm sure) notes, and he stays out of the way on stage....not attempting to hog the spotlight as Johnny T. was wont to do. These old guys ain't just going through the motions here - these are great live versions of tunes that should have made all involved multi-millionaires. All in all, a killer live show.....and I can't wait for the DVD!

The Solution - Communicate! **(Wild Kingdom)**

Damn! I haven't been able to get this one out of my CD player since I've gotten it! The Solution is the latest in a very long line of bands (Rationals, Sonics Rendezvous Band, Scot's Pirates, Powertrane, Hydromatics, Dodge Main, etc.) featuring the vocal stylings of Scott Morgan from Ann Arbor, Michigan. Scott and his partner in crime, one Nicke Andersson/Royale, from the Swedish band The Hellacopters, have put together this new large combo, including a horn section and bevy of female backing vocalists, to take us back to the days of the sweet soul music of the 60's. They've done a truly fabulous job here

in writing, arranging and playing 10 new original songs and 2 covers (Tony Joe White's "Widow Wemberly" and Major Lance's "Must Be Love Coming Down", written by Curtis Mayfield) that tap into the wellsprings of Stax, Muscle Shoals, Philly, and Motown. This music was made for Morgan's soulful voice - this is the best singing he's ever done, in my opinion, or at least since his work with The Rationals in the late 60's. (NOTE: The Scott/Nicke band The Hydromatics also did a couple of soul numbers with horns on their last LP, Powerglide.....similar to The Solution.) His guitar playing is equally fine, whether he's doing the Steve Cropper licks or the Curtis Mayfield comping. The band, including the aforementioned Nicke R. on the drums, nails the sounds and grooves to a tee. Recorded in Stockholm, Sweden, the first single release, "I Have To Quit You" (penned by Nicke) has gone top 10 in that country and in other parts of Europe. One of my favorite releases of 2004. Why can't white Americans make soul albums this good (AND authentic sounding)? (Actually, I've heard the new Hall & Oates CD, mostly 60's/70's Motown/Chi-town/Philly soul covers, is quite good....)

The Zombies - New World (Big Beat) **The Zombies - As Far As I Can See** **(Rhino)**

Over the past year or so, Colin Blunstone and Rod Argent have started using the name The Zombies again, in lieu of Argent/Blunstone or Blunstone/Argent. They've dug deep into the Zombies catalog and have been playing some of the old gems like "I Love You", "Just Out of Reach" and "Indication" live, as well as the Odyssey and Oracle LP tunes and the obvious hit singles ("She's Not There", "Tell Her No"). In addition, a slew of reissued and new Zombies-related recordings have come out - two of which I'll talk about here. New World was released in 1990 as Return of The Zombies, and was available for about 10 minutes, tops. Three of the original Zombies (Colin B., bassist Chris White, and drummer Hugh Grundy) took part in this comeback LP, with keyboardist Rod Argent replaced by a South American chap named Sebastian Santa Maria. Even without Argent, the old 3 part Zombies vocal harmonies were very much present here, as well as a bunch of excellent White-penned tunes, a cover of a Prefab Sprout song "Love Breaks Down", and an unnecessary remake of "Time Of The Season". As an

added bonus, an excellent demo of an unreleased song, "When My Boat Comes In", featuring all original Zombies, is included. Had this LP been released in the early 70's, methinks it would have been acclaimed as a very good follow-up to Odyssey and Oracle. Kudos to Big Beat and Alec Palao (responsible for the best box set ever, Zombie Heaven) for reissuing this gem.

Unfortunately, I'm not all that crazy about the Zombies' 2004 release of brand new material, As Far As I Can See. Colin Blunstone still has his fabulous pipes, and Rod A. can still play the piss out of his keyboards. While they're the only original Zombies here, Jim Rodford, of Argent/Kinks/Animals fame, who was asked to play bass in the band before Chris White joined in the early 60's, is also on board. The problem? With several notable exceptions, the songs just aren't that strong. I like the white soul/R&B-tinged opener, "In My Mind A Miracle", and the rocker "Time To Move". While "I Want To Fly" is drop dead gorgeous, it sounds like an airline commercial, and "Southside Of The Street" comes across as a bad Broadway show tune - when they recently played it at a live show, I was expecting Colin to start dancing, with showgirls falling in behind him. The rest of the new songs fall somewhere in between. Rod A. has been quoted as saying that he views this as the follow-up to Odyssey and Oracle. In my opinion, New World would be a better choice. Oh well, at least it's great to have them back!

South, and weaned on pro wrestling, guns, violence, and cheap booze, instead of coming from Queens and sniffing glue or Carbona, hanging out on 2nd Avenue, eating chicken vindaloo and doing hard drugs.....(well, actually, throwing guns into the mix as a difference isn't all that appropriate, as the late Johnny (Cummings) Ramone also liked guns.....). Then cross them with Motorhead, and you have AntiSeen. White trash hillbilly R&R, with covers of Ramones and C&W tunes thrown in, as well as odes to various pro wrestlers (Sabu, Cactus Jack, Terry Funk), all played at jackhammer intensity and speed to a crowd of rowdy redneck drunks. Great rock & roll!!! The DVD is really the best way to witness this band. You get the visuals that are lacking when you just listen to a CD, and there's much less chance of getting hurt than at a live show.

AntiSeen - 20th Anniversary Show (DVD) -

AntiSeen, the boys from Brutalsville, pulled out all the stops for this, their 20th anniversary live show in April 2003, from some sleazy little club in Charlotte, N.C. In addition to turning the stage into a Japanese hardcore wrestling scene, complete with barbed wire, flaming tables, and self-inflicted head wounds from broken beer bottles (I think, although they might have pulled the old hidden razorblade trick from pro wrasslin'), the band brought back most, if not all of their former band mates to play many of the older songs.....and they cover pretty much all of their recordings here, from their '85 Drastic EP, through the last studio effort, Boys From Brutalsville and Screamin' Bloody Live from 2002. If you're not familiar with Jeff Clayton and the band, imagine, if you will, the Ramones had they been raised in the deep

Zine Reviews By Dom Salemi

'Tis fitting, that we begin our examination with a look at ZINE WORLD, a guide to the underground press. While not as exhaustive as the seminal Factsheet Five, Zine World is a smartly written and winningly laid out guide to the world of independent publishing. In addition to the cogent and informative reviews of almost two hundred publications, there's a lengthy news section dealing with industry and First Amendment issues, a descriptive listing of vendors and venues for potential zinesters, postings of upcoming conferences, indie press shows and bookfests, and an exhaustive compendium of zine libraries and infoshops. Curious that these people shy away from the more professional looking publications, as Zine World is as slick as anything you'll find in the underground. This is a minor complaint, however, as this entertaining compendium has to be considered the dernier mot in the field (\$3 to PO Box 330156, Murfreesboro, TN 37133-0156.)

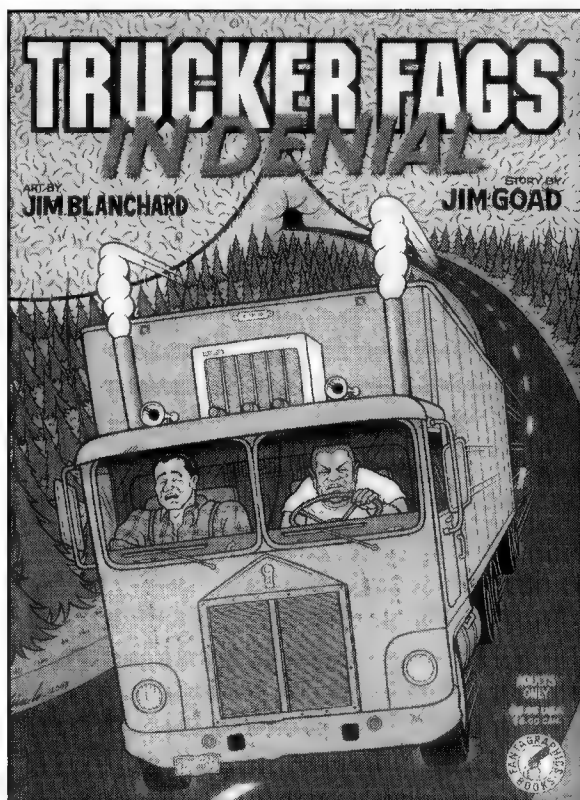
Describing itself as "Not As Good As Something Better," WENDY MAGAZINE is, in reality, something that is better than most of what passes for good. In other words, this primitive, photocopied minizine is something else. What this "else" be, we're not exactly sure yet, even after reading through Wendy a couple of dozen times. It's dada. It's surrealism. It's pop kulchur satire. And more! And it's all, all 28 absurd pages of it, very, very funny. Comic collages and fictional letters from celebrities vie for your

attention with satirical broadsides, interviews with non-existent people, fashion tips, scatological ads and childish drawings. Issue 6 features letters from an eccentric elderly lady who wrote to PBS each and every single day of her confinement in a rest home, and a diary extract from a "cicada survivor and witness." Write to the clearly insane editors at wendy@wendymagazine.com and ask, if they aren't busy conversing with their multiple personalities, where you might rustle up a copy.

John Waters once opined that to have good bad taste, you must first possess very good taste. Well the folks at CINEMA SEWER, a comic-book styled celebration of trash film, are so erudite, drolly comic, and literate, that publisher Robin Bougie and company don't even have you questioning why a second-tier porn star like Lee Carroll is being interviewed, or the reason we're being given a history of an obscure grindhouse in Phoenix. Moreover, the graphics are

simply amazing. Almost every one of the 40 densely-packed pages is painstakingly hand lettered in diminutive but arresting style. And yup, the lines are straight and everything is evenly spaced. Robin's obviously a professional inker and it shows. You pick up the zine, let it open, and immediately, the beauty of the lettering hits you like a chop to the windpipe. Amidst the verbiage are decent reproductions of ad mats and stills for classic and not-so-classic psychotronic and porn fare, and spot illustrations that are,





more often than not, little works of comic art in and of themselves. Every page of this amazing publication has something to recommend it, but we were especially impressed with the Q&A with Bo Arne Veenius, auteur behind the cult film *They Call Her One-Eye*, and an interview with a CS reader that beats to hell anything you'd find in *Film Comment*. In short, *Cinema Sewer* is a work of unsurpassed genius. Write to Robin at Mindseye11@hotmail.com for subscription and back issue info.

Well, we have to draw the line somewhere, and we think we will with *PEE SOUP*, the latest in Eros' kinky line of black and white comics. It's not that we have a problem with urolagia or the drawing, which is spare and lucid, if a little attenuated. We don't. But would it be too much to ask for a story line? Something other than, hot gal goes into a seedy bar and takes on all the men in the bathroom? And, while it is, no doubt, a clever marketing strategy to color the micturations a lovely shade of

saffron, one must ask if the illustrators might be overdoing it a tad in having our heroine, at narrative's end, colored completely in glowing yellow. Has all the urine suddenly turned her radioactive? We shudder to think what Eros has in store for us when their *Hot Lunch* hits the newsstands next month.

Far more amusing is the Jims Goad and Blanchard collaboration *TRUCKER FAGS IN DENIAL*. Amusing, as Mr. Goad takes every cliché in the book concerning repressed homosexuality, exaggerates it to the point of absurdity, and

gilds it with his own very real fear and loathing. Ostensibly the story of two ugly middle-aged truckers and their battles with their essential gayness, the comic is, in reality, a risible illustration of the author's own latency. Which in and of itself, may be a fiction. Nevertheless, how else to explain the coupling taken to surreal, disgusting heights (fist, then head, then whole body moving thru the rectum), the marvelous, tortured excuses for indulging ("For two men to share their bodily aromas and to bask in one another's manly juices, well, that only doubles their manliness."), the psychological

mastery of the subject ("They know there is only one way to slay the inner fag that tortures them. They will have to kill every homosexual on earth.") This is more than the product of mere research, this is the material from which dreams are made. And as Freud noted, dreams are simply unfulfilled wishes. Still, it's funny stuff, and Blanchard's clean, complex drawings contain a wealth of clever, hilarious, incidental detail, making it all the more amusing. None of *Trucker Fags* would really work, however, without the notion Goad engenders that he's far too involved with his subject. To further confuse us over the issue of authorial intent, Goad appends a short article on the symbolic import of his protagonists and how it contrasts with the real world of truck driving homosexuality.



Book Reviews By Dom Salemi

Chemical Pink – Katie Arnoldi (2001) (Forge Paperbacks)

Here's what happens to those professional body building gals ingesting and injecting enormous amounts of steroids, vitamins, and pharmaceuticals: the skin thickens and becomes coarse, the pores open and become visible, the clitoris substantially enlarges, boils and pimples dot, then cover the upper back, hair sprouts on the face and shoulders. Finally, the metabolism shuts down; unless you continue to work-out like a demon, obesity sets in.

Charles, a rich, emaciated weakling – in more ways than one – doesn't care about any of this. He's an artist, a sculptor of human bodies. He destroyed his last project, a beautiful, healthy young woman; nevertheless, Charles claims he never wanted her to leave. Love is forever, after all.

Now Charles has found Aurora Jeanine Johnson, a lovely piece of white trash hailing from Savannah, Georgia, who has won a few awards on the southern circuit. She's come to L.A. for a few weeks of rest and relaxation. Also to scope out the competition. Aurora is disheartened until Charles, after a few dates, tells her that if she is willing to live with him, be his lover and do everything he tells her, he can make her into the female equivalent of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Aurora, dazzled by the expensive gifts showered on her, and aroused by Charles' kinky eroticism, quickly agrees to put her body and life into her Svengali's hands. No worries as concerns her ungainly adolescent daughter Amy, this is Los Angeles; she'll grow to love it.

What Aurora fails, but ultimately comes to realize, is that Charles is also asking for her soul. First time novelist Arnoldi, herein fashions a neat twist on the Frankenstein myth by having her creature lose her spiritual core before rediscovering it. Although we're not asked to ponder too deeply on this or the underlying theme of obsession,

as the author's primary intent is comic. Thus our players, both principal and secondary, are deliberately drawn in one-dimension. In fact, just as much attention is paid to fleshing out the "character" of the drugs strutting their stuff on our stage. The dialogue, in turn, doesn't reveal so much as reaffirm the symbolic dress of the speaker. The sex is so droll, despite its kinkiness, the reader is forced to look at it with almost clinical detachment. It's all rather clever and it never gets the least bit tedious. What it does get, is funnier as it goes along, leading to a denouement as wickedly satisfying as it is outrageous.

I Spit On Your Graves – Boris Vian (1946/1998) (Tam Tam Books)

A succes de scandale in postwar France, thanks, in part, to a hoax perpetrated on the Paris literary community, I Spit On Your Graves has acquired something of a cult reputation during the last half-century. Initially submitted to a fledgling French publishing house by poet and polymath Boris Vian as a translation of an obscure Afro-American writer named Vernon Sullivan, this hardboiled novel went begging for readers. Then a right-wing literary group launched a lawsuit against the book based on its presumed immorality and, shortly thereafter, in 1947, the book was found in a hotel room where a man had strangled his mistress. Certain passages were circled, notably, one in which the novel's protagonist does the same. Suddenly, everyone in France wanted to read the book. In 1998, the English translation, also written by Vian, was finally made available stateside.

It's an unusual little novel, intense and mesmerizing despite its dispassion. Vian chose to write in a flat, unadorned style, completely devoid of emotion, lending an air of verisimilitude to the narration of his blithe, psychopathic narrator. A man curiously uninterested in his own fate, despite the fact that he knows his designs can only lead

to his death. The setting is the deep south. The man, whose name is Lee Anderson, is African-American, yet he passes for white. He has come to a small middle-class town to avenge the death of a brother who was lynched. Retribution will come in the form of the brutal murder of two high-class young women. Two for one. Two wealthy white girls for one poor black man.

Fantastic. Absurd. Unreal. Vian's protagonist walks about as in a dream; nevertheless, he remains in real time, chillingly upbeat about his prospects. That there will come the appropriate time to take the appropriate action. In the interim, he will parlay his job as manager of the local bookstore into friendships with the hip young things. Through them, there will be movement into the upper strata of society.

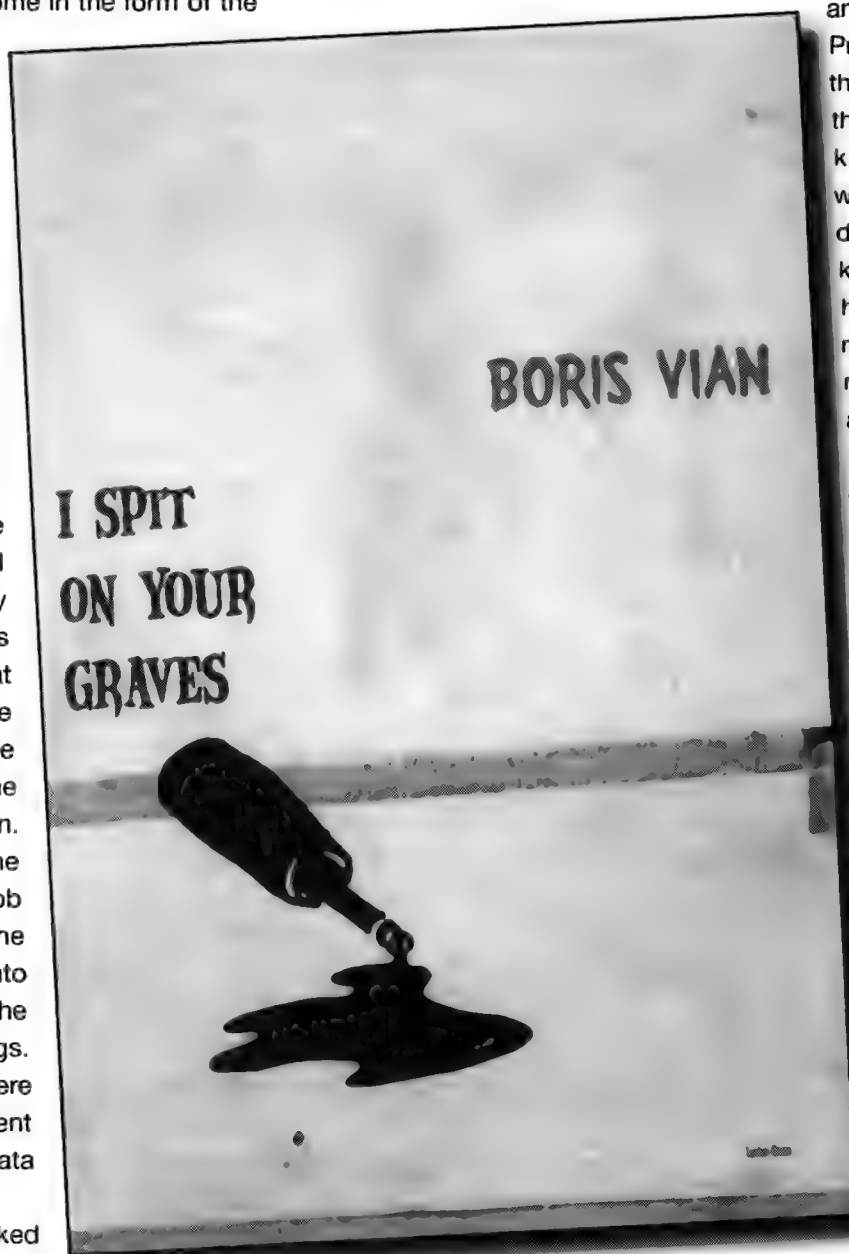
Loosely interlocked scenes of sex and partying serve as story. Floating uneasily underneath: a contempt, a loathing for American society, its mores, its attitudes toward race. It hits you like a cupped slap to the ear. Here are the last two lines: "The townspeople hanged him anyway because he was a nigger. Under his trousers, his crotch still protruded ridiculously."

Birth Of The Cool – Lewis MacAdams (2001) **(The Free Press)**

M'lords and ladies of the royal court, our dear hearts and gentle people at The Free Press would have us believe this tome to be the wiggliest, the mostest, the gassiest, the k-razzziest bit of historicism what should ever be laid down since that carpenter kitty told all and sundry that he was . . . The Nazz. Which mayest be right and true; nevertheless, in the days and long nights of ripperty bip and bop and rada-deet-deet deet, one might have ascribed the greater genius influence to cynical Jack's, drunken Jack's, spratly Jack's, On The Road. Or mayhap, the cock-loving cat seeing the greatest minds of his generation reduced to the . . . Howl. Nay, my lords and ladies, that was a poem. It was a long one though, almost an epic, so let us allow the true hipsters to put it up for nomination. As well as let the truly disaffected, nominate Naked Lunch. Noble causes all; nevertheless, Birth Of The Cool, subtitled Beat, Bebop, and the American Avant-garde remains, totally .

. . . with it. 'Cause the man what wrote it, despite being a world class poet, ain't into pontificating or didactying. No sir, my man, he's tapped in, way gone completely, into the power of story.

Story is the way to go. Always the way to go, if you think about it without thinking too much. Especially when you're trying to limn the entire history of the American avant-garde from 1940 to the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. 'Tis a burden; yet this cat, MacAdams, tells it



brilliantly, and manages, somehow, someway, to weave this magnificent tapestry along the way. Without letting any of the seams show, you dig? In the gentle sewing session, cats and kitties, we learn the manner in which Zen Buddhism got on line and why everyone was so down with it, why Pete Seeger rates with folk bodhisattva Woody Guthrie, how Thelonious Monk, as much as Miles or Bird led bop to cool and the Jim's to jazz, what "beat" is and most importantly, why it is not, necessarily synonymous with "cool." Still, here's the lick, the true gas – it's those nutty stories: Lucien Carr's murdering, dismembering and dumping a mentor's body parts in the East River, that wiggly Black Mountain School and their birthing of the "happening," the unbelievable-but-true tale of drugs, madness, mayhem and the incorporation of Afro-Cuban rhythms and melodies into bop by the now legendary Chano Pozo. At the heart of it all, like a Zen koan – What is the sound of one hand clapping? – is the notion of cool. As MacAdams notes: "Anyone striving to define 'cool' quickly comes up against cool's quicksilver nature. As soon as anything is cool, its cool starts to vaporize." At its heart though, cool is about defiance which in turn, is kind of what the avant garde is about: an attack on accepted notions of taste and beauty. So here's what flips us out studs and chicks: there weren't three more crazy, double euphoric nutty hipsters than Elvis Presley, Nina Simone and Johnny Cash. They certainly ain't jive. Yet there's no flippin over their scene? Well, we will make no comments, complaints, criticisms, avowals, appraisals. We will just flow, flow, be you what it is, and what it always is. This mad bad writer here is groovin' to his own wild irreverent vibe and payin for the gas. Thus, we grant indulgence for his missin' a few stops along the way and jump on in the back and let him take the wheel.

Retrohell – ed. Ben Is Dead Magazine (1997) (Little, Brown and Company)

This is the reason we mourn the demise of the zine revolution. Once upon a time, we had broke, highly motivated people in dead end jobs trying to explain our culture to us. It worked for a while, and then said revolution was co-opted and essentially put out to pasture. The independent record stores, Tower and the local rock clubs still stock a number of "zines"; but

they're no longer a threat to anything or anybody. Nor do the publishers want to be, depending as they do on the goodwill of the few merchants and club owners willing to carry their publications. This means the zine has to be bland and unadventurous so as not to offend the patrons and concertgoers. You have opinions, unusual art, experimental fiction? Take it to the net where all browsers have an attention span of exactly thirty seconds. Today, zines and the few larger independent publications one can find, are little more than the blind leading the blind in search of mindless self-affirmation. Ben Is Dead was not an especially literary metazine; nevertheless, it was viewed as very very hip in some quarters, embodying as it did, the solipsistic disdain for objectivity as well as a jocular contempt for the notions of value and aesthetic. Poorly educated Gen-Xers lapped this stuff up, despite editor Darby and Cos.' wretched, cutesy, self-conscious infantilist style. Ben Is Dead wallowed in and celebrated 80s (and to a lesser extent 70s) pop culture detritus and that was enough for its many readers. The fact that the staff didn't get most of it didn't really matter – sample entry for "Pooper Scooper": "... a wonder thing. So now in N.Y. you don't have shit in the streets, you just have piss from winos." – it was the mere juxtaposition of outre subjects like Leif Garrett with more weighty ones like starving Ethiopians ("We were forced to finish our meals because of these people.") that made it all so wonderful. Retrohell, whose avowed mission is to 'splain the 70s and 80s through its determinedly middle-class bratty LA perspective is equally delightful. An alphabetical guide to 70s and 80s subjects of almost no importance, which, in the final analysis, comes off as an inadvertent celebration of ignorance and philistinism. If you've ever wondered what a steady diet of television, marijuana, alcohol and comic books would do to the human brain, here's your chance to examine the evidence close-up and personal.

Sock – Penn Jillette (2004) (St. Martin's Griffin)

Anyone who's ever had the good fortune to lend an ear to the talky half of comical-magic act Penn & Teller should not be surprised that Penn Jillette has just penned a lively and highly idiosyncratic novel. Listening to the big lug, whether on stage or whilst watching Bullshit, the Emmy-Award winning debunking Showtime series, you quickly

conclude that the man was born to write. Which he does, constantly, but this is his first attempt at fiction. And boy, is it a doozy. On the surface, the story of a New York City police diver and his gay hairdressing friend's efforts to find the killer of the cop's former lover. In reality, a wiggly mediation on life, love and the

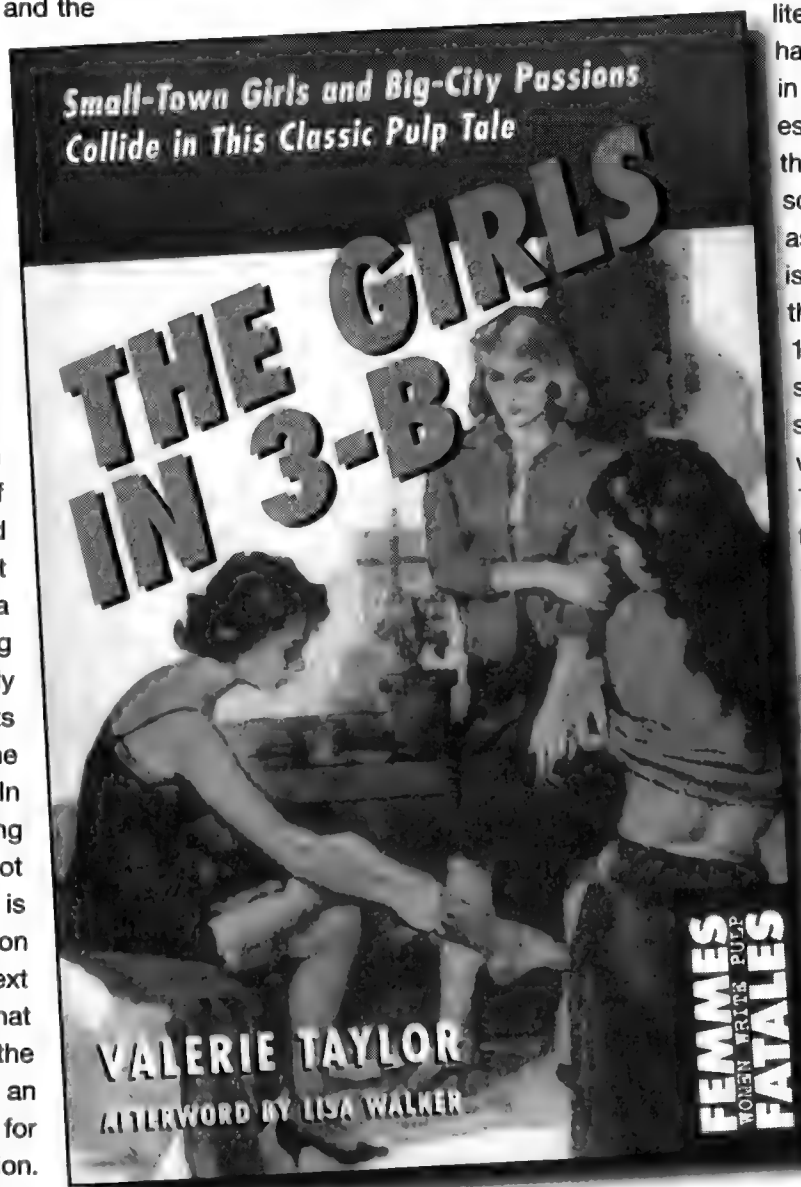
whole damned thing.

The story is fairly interesting, Penn's a born storyteller, you know that already; still, what keeps you reading are all those philosophically comic discursions on sexuality, religion, the nature of reality, etc. Seasoned with scores and scores of references to 70s and 80s pop culture. It works as kind of a Brechtian distancing affect but it also cleverly and ingeniously puts the capper on the disquisition at hand. In fact most of everything works in Sock, not the least of which is Jillette's heartfelt notion and underlying subtext to much of this that humans, pushed in the right direction, have an enormous capacity for love and compassion. Sure there's bad craziness and much evil out there but what the hell does that have to do with anything? One bad apple don't spoil the whole bunch girl! Oh yes, did we forget to mention that the whole shebang is narrated by the policeman's sock monkey?

The Girls In 3-B – Valerie Taylor (1959/2003) **(The Feminist Press)**

The good folks at The Feminist Press would have you believe that *The Girls In 3-B* is a landmark in women's

literature and, while it may have some historical import in the lesbian subgenre, it's essentially a potboiler. And the lesbian aspect is not the sole concern of Valerie Taylor, as her Saphic heroine's story is just one of three making up the novel. Our girls are three 18 year old friends leaving a small Midwestern town to seek a better life in Chicago whilst rooming together. There's Barby, our lesbian-to-be, molested as a young teen and despite her stunning looks and figure, a damaged and lost soul. Pat, is the cornfed rebel of the group, pretending to not give a damn about her childbearing hips and broad shoulders but secretly wishing she was more like Barby. Or perhaps, Annice, the soi-disant poet and intellectual of the trio. A stunning pre-Raphaelite red-head, Annice is coming to the City of the Big Shoulders to get an education while working part time.



We would like to be able to say that Ms. Taylor skillfully interweaves the stories of the three young girls but, alas, she shows little interest in plotting. The syntax and diction is uninvolved as well; still, Taylor's hatred for men is as pure as a child's heart on Christmas Day and it is this misandry that makes *Girls* such a joy to read. There's no in-between for Taylor: her men are either predators or simpletons. There's the swarthy, muscular Sicilian janitor in the girl's boardinghouse hell bent on rape, the Ivy League executive stooping only

to conquer, the bohemian misogynist. The two suitors willing to take “no” for an answer fail in their attempts at the hot gate only because of their intellectual limitations, i.e., they are morons looking for self affirmation. In any case, it’s all one and the same in the final analysis leaving women with only two choices: the comforting embrace of a woman or life as a hausfrau, the latter which may possibly be tempered somewhat by guile, the ability to use physical charms and/or psychosexual dynamics to ameliorate instinctual male dominance.

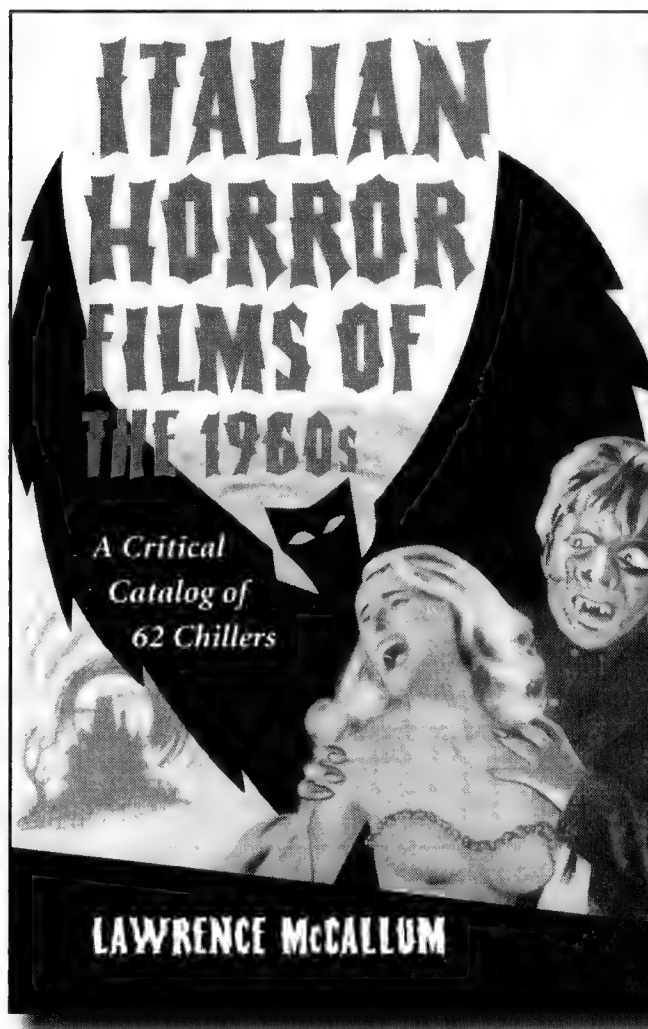
This reductionism is risible; never more so than in scenes in which Taylor’s ineffectual lampoons of Beat life and the egotistical, atavistic males who dominate it. Taylor seems to have forgotten that it was the Beat’s with their avant garde aesthetics, willingness to experiment with alternative lifestyles and sexual liberality, who were instrumental in advancing the cause of gay rights.

Those looking for the cheap thrills normally to be found aplenty in pulp fiction of this type are advised to look elsewhere. Taylor aspires to poetry in her depiction of heterosexual coupling and in the big pay-off lesbian scene, cuts away after an embrace to a post-coital aftermath. She only lets everything go in a chapter where Annice and her beatnik lover drop peyote and it’s so lurid and overwritten it leaves you baffled as to why Taylor refused to bring this same addle-pated intensity to the rest of her novel.

Italian Horror Films Of The 1960s – Lawrence McCallum (1988/2004) McFarland

An entertaining, scholarly and highly critical overview of sixty-two horror films, most of which McCallum dismisses in peremptory fashion. The primary complaint: the motion pictures under discussion relied far too heavily on American models and suffered from indifferent acting and impoverished budgets. For genre fans, however, the charm in trifles like *Caltiki*, *The Immortal Monster* and *Atom Age Vampire*, reside in their earnest desire to please, their childish libidinousness, their incoherent narratives. On a purely aesthetic level, the author is correct: none of these films achieve the giddy, hateful heights of a *Psycho* nor possess the malign onerous pull of a *Vampyr*. Unfair touchstones, as the Hitchcock and Dreyer films are two

of the supreme works in this often discredited genre. Cheap thrills, a few laughs, an occasional frisson, a bit of decadence, this is what the Italians were after. Directors like Mario Bava and Riccardo Freda looked to AIP and Roger Corman for inspiration. Complex exploration of theme, transcendence, subtlety, the sublime: anathema to the auteur and production company seeking to wring a few bucks from Hercules in the Haunted World or Fangs of the Living Dead. Few horror pictures, moreover, bear up under close scrutiny and thus to so closely deconstruct entertaining and fairly accomplished exercises like *The Last Man On Earth* and *Kill Baby Kill* seems just a wee bit unfair. McCallum does acknowledge the enormous influence of the aforementioned and a few others like *Mill of the Stone Women*. Nevertheless, it is damning with faint praise, and, after reading a dozen or so pages, much less all 253, the reader might be forgiven for asking why McCallum has troubled himself with all of this. Is it because, despite the author’s scholarly inclinations, he finds so much of this wonderfully diverting and entertaining?





MOVIE REVIEWS By Dom Salemi

Robot Monster (1953) – (d) Phil Tucker (sp) Wyott Ordung

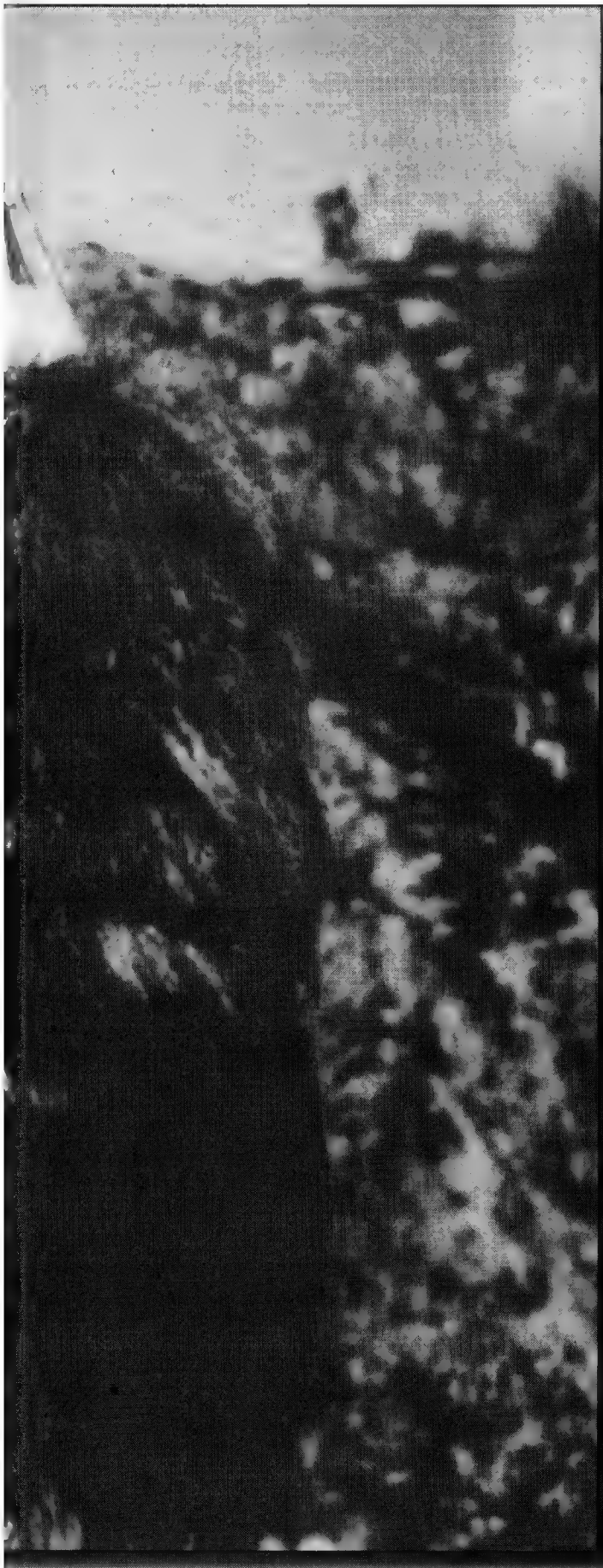
Connoisseurs of bad film get into trouble working toward a consensus on, well, just about anything. Except, possibly, for acknowledging this independent sci-fi effort as one of the worst films ever made. Oz is jiggy with this, as *Robot Monster* is easily on a par with *Mesa of Lost Women* or *Zontar, Thing From Venus*. Nevertheless, this so-called consensus results, more than likely, from most trash fiends never having laid their orbs on a single frame of this unusual feature. One look at the titular monster—a gorilla-suited lug adorned with a diving helmet and television antennae – and most genre fans conclude that they know all they need to know.

How wrong they be. While *Robot Monster* is indifferently acted, sluggishly directed, and tepidly paced, somewhere along the way, it manages to come together as an inane and banal dream where logic surrenders to caprice, diction is forced to don gibberish's rainment, effect proceeds without the aid of causality and madness banishes reason. Everything happens. And nothing happens. Things proceed apace, double back on themselves, and lose their way. So much so, that by film's end, "yes" and "no" and all the opposites have met and nothing is true. Yet everything, nevertheless, is permitted.

Which is as it should be, since this all takes place in the mind of a ten year old child. A child dreaming his dreamy little child-dreams after falling from some rocks and knocking himself unconscious. We're not told this until the end of *Robot Monster* but it's apparent rather early that this is so. One minute little Tommy is asleep with his family at a picnic in the mountains (and how weird is this with women in party dresses sleeping on rocks) and the next, young Tom is awake while all lie around him unconscious. Cut suddenly to a gorilla suit with a diving helmet talking to another gorilla suit with a diving helmet, that latter broadcasting on a giant screen television whilst lights strobe and crackle and soap bubbles dance all about us.

The human race is no more. Wiped out by creatures calling themselves Ro-Men and their liberal employment of their calcinator ray. Tommy and his family – grandparents, little sis Carla, voluptuous older sister Alice, and the grandfather's hunky research assistant, Roy – have been spared thanks to an immunization serum developed by the grandfather. The single Ro-Man perambulating about the cave has been sent to planet earth to finish the job. He's unable to locate Tommy and his clan thanks to Alice, who just so happens to be an electronic genius and has thus set up some kind of invisible force field.





Impossibility upon improbability upon inanity. The family sleeps in the open in a bombed-out building, eats nothing and stays scrupulously clean. The Ro-Man discovers he can make contact with the surviving clan via his futuristic television, yet is unable to pinpoint their location. In the midst of this fight for the future of the human race, Roy and Alice ask the grandfather to marry them, then head outside the invisible force field to do the Adam and Eve bit. Ro-Man kills Roy and the little sister but decides he wants to mate with Alice. At which point, Ro-Man's leader, The Great One (no, not Jackie Gleason), zaps our Ro-Man through the futuristic tv and unleashes dinosaurs to walk the earth.

Right, we're making this up as we go along. Much the way a child would while playing with his friends out in the backyard. The dialogue contains the same startling inconsequentiality: the adults consistently explaining and rehashing the story for us, the exchanging of humorless non-sequiturs, the scientific explanations containing not a scintilla of science. And yes, the surreal dialogue. Here is Ro-Man's soliloquy, his internal debate over the fate of Alice, with whom he has fallen in love:

I cannot . . .

Yet I must!

How do you calculate that?

At what point on the graph

do "must" and "cannot" meet?

Yet I must . . .

But I cannot.

An idiot celebration of the unformed and uninformed mind, Robot Monster is almost totally bereft of sense. And sensibility. Not a bad thing, as intelligence, quite often is little more than the triumph of sound education and pragmatism. Fortunately, life and films like Robot Monster are often something else and their pleasures innumerable.

The Atomic Brain (1964) – (d) Joseph V. Mascelli (sp) Vi Russell et al

The tag line: "Can death be outwitted?" We're not sure of that, however, we can say for certain, that this flick, brought to us, courtesy of Ray Dennis Steckler's cinematographers, possesses not a goat's worth of wit. We got a mad scientist, one Dr. Otto Frank, working out of the basement of a creepy mansion owned by an elderly, crippled dingbat looking for the fountain of youth. Dr. Frank has convinced the hateful harridan that if she lets him build an atomic lab downstairs he can perfect brain transplant experiments that will eventually allow him to

take her gray matter and put it into the skull of a hot young thing. She remains gung-ho for the project despite the fact that previous transplants with animal brains and humans have resulted in weremen and catgirls. So three European hotties are brought in as potential and unwilling body donors, although they are told, of course, that they are to work as maids. It takes the new found "servants" all of three minutes to ask out once they arrive and find the wereman peeking in the window. But a badly aging manservant hustles them into rooms in various parts of the house and locks them in. Despite this, they shine the silverware, vacuum the threadbare rugs and pour drinks. Meanwhile, the experiments continue and things don't so much go from bad to worse as become progressively more ridiculous. Atomic Brain, nevertheless, manages to entertain mightily, thanks to a script so implausible it would have embarrassed the aforementioned Steckler, wooden acting, and a kind of dime store seediness not seen since the heyday of Todd Slaughter. "She doesn't have a brain. Imagine the possibilities." Thanks to the ineptitude of Mascelli and Co., this is a relatively simple task.

She Gods of Shark Reef (1956) – (d) Roger Corman (sp)Robert Hill, Victor Stoloff

There's bad, and then there's bad. This stinker is the latter. No unintended laughs, just one stultifying, pointless scene after another. Legendary director Roger Corman rarely mentions the film in interviews, and, after sitting thru this 63 minute bomb – it seemed like an eternity – one can easily see why. From the opening sequence, in which one of the stars and a turbaned, bare-chested Hindu attack a boat guard for no apparent reason and then jump back into the drink, the film lumbers along mindlessly until the end credits. The press book tells us it's the story of two brothers – one blonde and good, the other dark-haired and, therefore, bad – on the lam on a remote, girls-only island in the South Pacific, *She Gods* is, in reality, about nothing at all. The island gals are pearl divers for a big corporation and are fiercely protected by a graying, misandric lesbian. Our brothers have destroyed their boat trying to navigate the reefs fronting the isle and so have nothing to do aside from sleeping and eating. Oh yes, and trying to fend off the advances of the women, most of whom are rather stunning. These are the only "shes" in the flick as there are no "she gods." There is a generic Tiki stone head under the water near the shore. This is supposed to be

a deity, or at least the image of one. We are never really told. The women appear to believe that this head blesses their efforts and keep them safe from the shark, er sharks, swimming in and around the holy waters. We know there are sharks though. Corman and company see to that by constantly breaking from the inaction and treating us to bits of stock underwater footage. With sharks. We do not, however, really see any of the actors interacting with said sharks. No time. They're too busy eating and sleeping. Well, that's not quite true. Our Polynesian playmates do skip the light fantastic once in a while. For the two brothers. Only one of whom seems to really be interested. Maybe he's frightened of the old dame. Maybe he's gay and just can't admit it to himself. That's probably why he's frowning all the time and complaining about being stuck on the island. Why are we asking questions like this? Trust us, it's the only way to make things move faster. Corman house composer, Ronald Stein, said that in his humble opinion this was "one of the worst films ever made." It was so bad that he actually composed an hour's worth of music for a feature only three minutes longer than that. "It needed 60 minutes of music to save it," said Mr. Stein. Ronald, however, is being a bit disingenuous, no one, not Mr. Stein, not Igor Stravinsky, could have rescued this exercise in futility.

The Amazing Transparent Man (1960) – (d) Edgar G. Ulmer

This film brings to mind the story concerning the long running dispute between screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz and Orson Welles over the primary responsibility for the success of *Citizen Kane*. Welles claimed he was the



auteur, the deus ex machina, while Mankiewicz asserted that no director, no matter how brilliant, could create a work of cinematic art without an accomplished script. Welles continued to insist otherwise, and so one day, after learning he had been hired to work once again with Welles, Mankiewicz walked into the Great One's office and tossed him a script, advising him to "work his magic on this." Welles thumbed through a few pages and then looked up querulously, "The pages are all blank, Herman." Mankiewicz quickly riposted, "That's right, Orson, since you're under the impression nobody helped you with Kane, I thought it be really interesting to see what you could do without a script."

This bit of Hollywood lore is resurrected here as B-movie maven Edgar G. Ulmer is often lauded as a man who could make wondrous stuff out of whole cloth. Detour, The Black Cat, The Man From Planet X, are all cited as evidence supporting this thesis. We present, as Exhibit A, this rudely formed bit of fluff from late in Edgar's career, as support for the proposition, that no one, not even Orson Welles, could work magic from a threadbare script. Although we're not sure that The Amazing Transparent Man even had one, as there appears to be just the bare bones of an idea passing as story, and the whole enterprise appears to be have been made up as shooting progressed. How else to explain a radioactive ray which can render a man and his clothes invisible, but not the straps which bind him. Or why you'd unstrap the criminal you just made transparent and let him get up and off the operating table without attempting to restrain him. Or how you're going to create an invisible army without drawing attention to your project when you can only bombard one soldier at a time. What? You're just going to rent an airplane hangar on the outskirts of town and calmly march ten thousand men through the gates?

Normally, this kind of inanity would be fodder for loads of laughs. However, when you have sequence after sequence of people talking and not really saying anything, nothing to give you pause in the mise en scene, and plot devices taking the story in uneventful and uninteresting directions, bitter tears in the eyes of the viewer is the more likely result. In sum, the only thing "amazing" about The Amazing Transparent Man is Mr. Ulmer allowing his name to appear in connection with its release.

Voyage To The Planet of Prehistoric Women (1968) – (d) Peter Bogdanovich

Hey, forget about 2001: A Space Odyssey as the ultimate trip. Drop some acid and tune in to this wild and crazy

feature. It is, not to put too fine a point on it, The Most! Producer Roger Corman takes an arty Russian sci-fi flick Planet of Storms (1962), gives it to Peter and lays this on him: "Make it even craaaazier than what Curtis Harrington and I did to it in 1962 with Voyage to the Prehistoric Planet." Bog says, "Well, what did you do, Roger baby." Roger hips Bog to the fact that they hacked the Russian flick to pieces and added new footage to it. "Cool," responds the young Bog and proceeds to go them one better by not only dicing and splicing the Russian film vegamatic style and inserting new sequences, but adding scenes from neophyte Frankie Coppola's science-fiction opus Battle Beyond The Sun, also made for Corman in 1963.

The original Ruskie epic had cosmonauts hitting the terra-not-so-firma of Venus on a rescue mission. Once outside the ship, the intrepid crew encountered dinosaurs, man-eating plants, and all manner of nasty things. Bogdanovich added his own voice-over narration as a framing device, in the process, extemporizing a story concerning said narrator falling for the siren call of a Venusian gal. This gave Bog the opportunity to hire Mamie Van Doren and some hot models to walk about the desert in seashell bras and shimmery hipuggers. The gals communicate by telepathy and worship a pterodactyl. Don't ask why? Why is not an operative term in this movie.

Absurd, astounding, unreal: a fantastic voyage to the bottom of your mind! Empty it of all preconceptions and just let the sound and Bogdanovich's vision have its way with you. The drone of our love stricken narrator makes increasingly less sense as we proceed; yet what matter that? Dig the monochromaticism and the way in which it contrasts with the empty sounds of space. The attenuated siren-squeal cries of the clam-shell-clad cuties. The beeps and squonks comprising the soundtrack. Thrill to the impossible attempt to interweave the look and texture of three highly disparate films. Shake your head in wonder at time passing so slowly and you barely noticing.

Cut and Run (1986) – (d) Ruggero Deodato (sp) Cesare Frugoni et al

Long unavailable in the United States, this newly restored Deodato film has developed something of a cult reputation due to its scarcity and the fact that the Italian director was also responsible for Cannibal Holocaust, one of the sickest little exploitation pictures ever made. Unfortunately, despite the addition of the excised gore, this tedious effort is no Cannibal Holocaust. In fact, there's not even any cannibalism in the film. Which is



pretty darn depressing as we're told that the savages in the flick are cannibals. The Amazonian natives are pretty darn nasty though, and Deodato allows them to hack and slash almost at will. And there's a really gross scene in which one of the good guys gets slowly pulled-apart by a primitive log and twine contraption. There's also ample nudity by some Italian nobodies, but stars Lisa Blount and Karen Black keep their clothes on and that's pretty depressing. Shame on you, Lisa and Karen, if you're going to make trash, you need to get down and dirty too.

Our story has Ms. Blount as an investigative journalist in Venezuela searching for the son of wealthy industrialists, the mother of whom is Karen Black. After being introduced to us, Ms. Black spends the remainder of the film gesticulating wildly and tossing her lovely mane of hair to and fro. Blount spends most of her time on board a plane searching for the son, until getting captured by the bad guys and having her safari outfit torn in strategic places and suspended provocatively from a tree. There are numerous subplots, two of which involve Michael Berryman and Richard Lynch but they don't amount to a hill of beans. As does little in *Cut and Run*. The lack of a coherent narrative, though, isn't what sinks *Cut and Run*; it's the refusal of the producers to invest the non-violent sequences with any sense of purpose. These scenes have the look and feel of filler, they're a clumsy rope ladder serving only to connect story with scenes of gratuitous violence. As the latter total about five minutes worth of running time that leaves the viewer with eighty-five minutes of time to kill.

Horror of Spider Island (1959) – (d/sp) Fritz Boettger

Critics are split into two camps concerning this impoverished little German horror oddity. On the one hand, there are scholars like Phil Hardy, the most forgiving of men, who believe *Spider Island* to be one of the worst films produced in any genre. Then there are those, like French surrealist Ado Kyrrou, who hold that the delirious mixture of sex and horror have resulted in an inadvertent work of dadesque art. We're somewhat in the middle here. On the one hand, *Spider Island* is an incredibly tedious piece of bilge. On the other hand, *Spider Island* is an incredibly tedious piece of bilge. Still, if you're drunk enough, or haven't seen a naked woman in ages, it can be enormously diverting. Here's the set-up: a plane crash lands eight hoochie-koochie dancers and their Charles Atlas-like promoter on a remote island somewhere near Indonesia. They find a cabin and a dead

elderly scientist in a huge spider web but no matter: it's hot and the gals are horny and so, after a few minutes of soul searching, it's off with the dresses and dance dance dance. When night falls, the hirsute, barrel-chested promoter, tired of the dancing and the cat-fighting and the promiscuity, hies for the jungle to clear his thoughts. He is quickly bitten by a spider the size of his head and turns into a spider monster. The girls, bored by all the dancing and cat-fighting, decide to turn in rather than search for the manager. Next morning, our gals engage in a fitful search but quickly grow tired of this, despite one of their number being strangled. They bury their friend and decide the best course is to swim and dance. When two of the professor's research assistants land on the island late in the afternoon, they too get in on the drinking and dancing. Even though informed of the monster lurking in the shadows and the dead girl.

Yeah, if we wanted to be really hip, we could incorporate all manner of quotes from the likes of Breton and Tzara, making *Spider Island* appear to be an exquisite piece of offhand cool. That would be wrong, though, because this cackhanded bit of claptrap with dialogue bearing absolutely no relation to the reality loosely presented,

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women in states of heat so absurd as to beggar description, and . . .

And, Father, forgive us, none of this, nothing mattered: we loved the females oozing haphazard desire, the impoverished effects, the monster that reminded us of nothing so much as ourselves. That Babs, oh, that Babs, with the Cadillac hips, bee-stung lips, hot, wild ass of a jungle animal . . . Give us this day . . .

Thriller: A Cruel Picture (1970) – (d/sp) Bo Arne Vibenius

Also known as *They Call Her One Eye*, Thriller the ridiculous title American distributors gave it after shoring it of twenty controversial minutes. Now, after Quentin Tarantino having admitted – probably at knife point – that he based Daryl Hannah's *Kill Bill* character on the film's heroine, Synapse Films decides to strike while things are hot.

Although not so hot, is this Swedish potboiler, which, despite oodles of hardcore sex and ultra-violence, is a plodding, uninvolved bore. Hell, the director himself has recently gone on record admitting that his magnum opus is a "piece of shit," so we're not exactly going out on a limb here. Perhaps this tale of a violated woman wrecking vengeance on her abusers was fresh and shocking in 1970, but it's since been handled far better, notably in Abel Ferrara's *Ms. 45*, released almost a decade later.

So here's what you may or may not find shocking. Madeleine, a young girl living in a small, isolated farming town in Sweden, is raped by an old man while playing in a field one day. While nothing is shown, the build-up is fairly lengthy and uncomfortable to watch. The assault leaves Madeleine mute. Years later, the girl has grown into a beautiful young woman, but one who, thanks to the overprotectiveness of her doting parents, is incredibly unschooled in the ways of the world. For some reason, Madeleine is allowed, unescorted, to take a bus into the city once a week for psychiatric sessions. Well, you can guess what's coming, can't you? Madeleine misses the bus and allows herself to be picked up by a white slaver who turns her into a drug addict and then sets her up in a back room of his 60s popluxe-styled pad as a prostitute. When she refuses to play, the pimp cuts her eye out in a slow and methodical way. Suitably tamed, Madeleine allows herself to be degraded in all manner of ways. Which we are treated to courtesy of grainy x-rated inserts.

If you make it through all of this, you get to see Madeleine plotting her revenge on her days off – karate lessons, gunshooting practice, and driver's ed with a stuntcar master. Then it's back to the brothel for more humiliation and drug injections. When Madeleine decides it's time, she tracks down all of her "clients" and coolly blows them away. Special revenge is reserved for the pimp who brought all of this down on her.

Because everything was filmed with deliberation and an almost determined indifference, Thriller's champions, including the aforementioned Tarantino, have hailed the film as an exploitive work of art. The thinking goes that, if everything is given equal value, then exploitation becomes a mediation on the cinema's voyeuristic gaze and God and man's indifference to man. Well, to quote, the late Billy Preston, "Nothing from nothing leaves nothing. And ya gotta have something, if you want to stay with me." In other words, there's nothing here. Nothing to arouse. Nothing to provoke thought.

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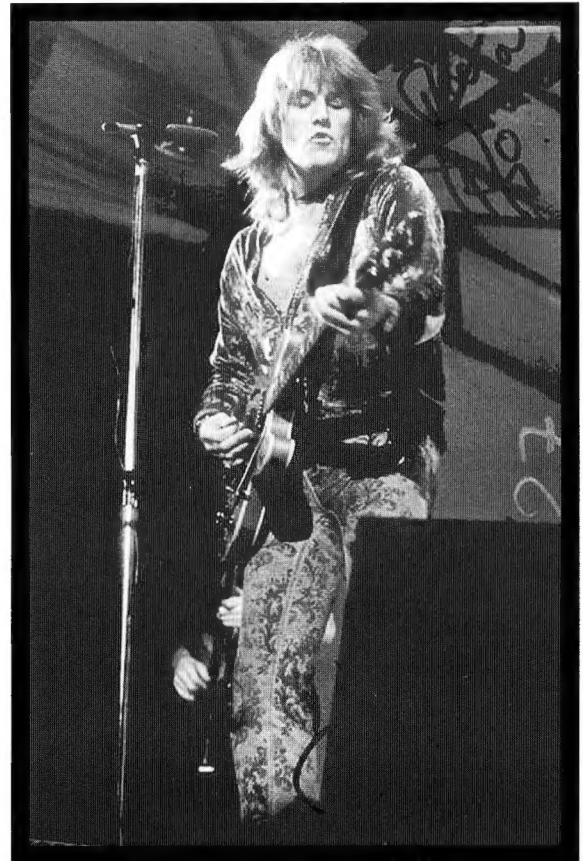
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